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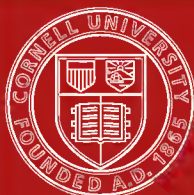
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# THAT PRETTY YOUNG GIRL

*A NOVEL*

BY

**LAURA JEAN LIBBEY**

*AUTHOR OF*

"MISS MIDDLETON'S LOVER," AND "A FORBIDDEN  
MARRIAGE."

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NEW YORK

THE TRADE SUPPLIED BY

**THE AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY**

1889

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Miss Laura Jean Libbey wishes to notify her readers and the public that she claims and has copyrighted but the three novels entitled:

**MISS MIDDLETON'S LOVER,  
A FORBIDDEN MARRIAGE,  
AND  
THAT PRETTY YOUNG GIRL.**

Each book contains her portrait. Neither book is genuinely Laura Jean Libbey's latest book unless it contains said portrait.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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To the public and the critics who have received my former books, "Miss Middleton's Lover" and "A Forbidden Marriage," cordially, I wish to say that I am grateful.

I can but hope this work will meet with like favor.

The construction of a novel is not the easiest of tasks—for that book has never been written which will please everyone.

That a novel can do much good or much harm in the world cannot be disputed, for it finds its way to the fireside of the mansion and cottage alike, and is the silent companion which serves to mold the character and future of many a young girl for good or for evil; and, therefore, it is a pleasing thought to the novelist that what has been written has pointed out a strong moral and led no youthful mind astray.

Some claim that human life should be painted *as it is*; that wickedness should be written up as it is found in every-day life, that the unwary may know where the shoals and quicksands lie.

I hold this should not be.

Dissection is good for science; but the world at large would scarcely be benefited if doctors should unfold the secret horrors they know concerning the human family.

## PREFACE.

This holds good with authors as well. Ignorance of wicked ways is bliss, therefore 'tis folly to be wise.

The candor of one woman who has read my books amuses me. She writes me she "would be better pleased if my heroes had more *sand* and less of the angel about them, then they would be more true to nature," as she has by experience found the world of men—and young girls would know these lords of creation *as they are*.

Again I say, this should not be.

The happiest epoch of a young girl's life is the day-dreams she has of the lover who shall come to her some day, and of the roseate future stretching away beyond.

I should not like to destroy those girlish fancies. It is not pleasant to think of white doves coming to the muddy pool to drink; it is less pleasant to contemplate innocence drinking at the fountain of knowledge—of the world, worldly.

I add, in conclusion, that I write of men as I find them—loyal, noble, and brave, with a chivalrous reverence for true womanhood, and who hold that purity in woman is the rose-bloom which jewels her existence.

LAURA JEAN LIBBEY.

472 PUTNAM AVE., BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

July 25, 1889.

# THAT PRETTY YOUNG GIRL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT HAPPENED AT MIDNIGHT.

“There are songs enough for the hero  
Who dwells on the heights of fame ;  
I sing for the disappointed,  
For those who missed their aim.

I sing with a tearful cadence  
For one who stands in the dark,  
And knows that his last, best arrow  
Has bounded back from the mark.

There are songs enough for the lovers  
Who share love's tender pain ;  
I sing for the one whose passion  
Is given, and in vain.

For the hearts that break in silence  
With a sorrow all unknown ;  
For those who need companions,  
Yet walk their ways alone.”

E. W. W.

“Do you wish for anything else, sir?” asked the host of the Queen's Inn, as he set down the pens, ink and paper on the table in room No. 24, which the mysterious guest who had but just arrived had rang for.

There was no answer ; the stranger did not turn from the window, where he stood gazing intently out into the moonlit night—gazed, without seeing.

The old innkeeper looked curiously at his guest as he stood there, with his profile clearly defined against the background of the dull red, looped-back curtain. The face was clearly cut, with handsome features, dark blue eyes, straight brows, and the lips, half hidden by the fair, drooping mustache, were well shaped. His head was proudly set, covered with fair hair, waving from a broad white brow. The figure was tall, well knit, finely formed, with a certain careless, easy grace about it, as he stood leaning against the casement. He was as handsome and comely a young Englishman as one would care to see.

The old innkeeper repeated his question, and the stranger wheeled suddenly around just as the man reached the door.

"Hold! I do want something more," he said huskily. "I want you to return here in an hour's time for two letters. I shall in all probability—be—asleep—so do not knock; enter with your pass key. You will find the letters on the table. I wish them mailed at once. Can I trust that you will attend to this matter faithfully?" he asked, with a touch of wistfulness in his voice.

"To be sure you can, sir," responded the man, bowing himself out of the room. When the door closed after him, the stranger threw himself down on a chair by the table, burying his face in his hands.

"That is the last human face that I shall ever see," he muttered, drawing his breath hard. For some moments he sat thus, and the deep silence of the room was broken only by his hard, measured breathing, and the ticking of a small clock on the mantel.

"Why should I hesitate over this matter?" he ruminated, lifting his white, haggard face from his hands. "A man can die but once; what matters it whether it is now or years hence?"

As he muttered the words, he drew a revolver from his

breast pocket and laid it down on the table before him. His hand travelled again to his breast pocket—an inner one, this time—and he drew from it a small leather case; with trembling fingers he pressed the spring and the lid flew back, disclosing by the dim, flickering candle-light the face of a woman, young and marvellously fair. Beneath the portrait, in a graceful, girlish hand, was written the name—Helen.

Long and earnestly he gazed upon the pictured face. The slow, measured strokes of the clock as it chimed the half hour recalled him to the knowledge of how swiftly time was passing.

“What I have to do must be done quickly,” he muttered, drawing the candle nearer him.

With hands that trembled despite his effort to maintain his self-control, he took the card portrait from its frame and held it over the flame. In an instant a ruddy blaze lighted the plain, sombre room. The card burned close to the white fingers that held it, then fell in a charred mass to the table. A passing breeze from the window caught them up, and scattered them about the apartment like a gust of black snow-flakes. His lips quivered, and his eyes grew moist as he watched them; that was all the sign he gave of the great emotion that he was keeping in abeyance with an iron will.

Hurriedly picking up the pen he commenced his letter. It was addressed to Captain Eugene Montgomery, Kent, England, and read as follows :—

“MY DEAR FRIEND EUGENE :—

“When you read what I have written here, I shall be no more; but death, even by one’s own hand, is easier to face than dishonor.

“By the time this reaches you, all London will be shocked by a crime which has been laid at my door. I

will give you a *résumé* of the whole affair, and you shall judge, as the world will judge from the facts here stated, whether I am *innocent* or *guilty*.

“It is useless going into detail as to my boyhood; who knows better than yourself how happy it was—and cloudless. When I came of age I made great resolutions as to the future, and I meant to keep them—Heaven knows I did. My poor father called me Arthur, after one of our ancestors who saved a king’s life by his bravery. I have not been a worthy descendant of the Arthur Douglas who received in his own breast the sword meant for his liege lord. Men will condemn the crowning act of my life as the act of a coward, but you could refute such charges, remembering how we have faced the foe together on many a battle-field. In the thickest of the fight I never faltered, even when shot and shell fell like hail-stones around us, cutting down our comrades like reeds before the storm on all sides of us. We lost sight of each other, you and I, when I was exchanged into the ——th regiment.

“I went to Branlea, that garden spot of England, with a comrade, on my furlough. That event was the turning point of my life; for there I met Miss Helen—the daughter of Squire Trevalyn, a wealthy country gentleman, whose villa adjoined that of my friend’s.

“It would take the words of a poet to tell you what Helen Trevalyn was like; tall, slender, when I looked at her, the words of Tennyson always occurred to me:

“ ‘A daughter of the gods divinely fair  
And most divinely tall.’

Her face was a reflex of what her life had been—pure as a lily. Her sweet loveliness revealed no trace of human passion—there was nothing to mar the calmness of girlhood.

"I never rested until I had secured an introduction to her, and from that moment my life seemed to grow complete, for I had met the one, out of the whole world of women, whom I would care to make my wife.

"I believe the same element lives in all love stories; the more I was with Helen, the deeper grew my love for her; her name was the last on my lips at night. I saw her sweet face in my dreams, and when morning broke my first thought was of her. She was so proud, so shy, so reserved with me that I never felt sure whether she cared for me or not.

"Matters might have gone on in this way for an indefinite period, had not an event happened that changed the whole course of affairs in Helen's home. It came about in this way:

"One day, while the squire was away in London, a telegram came to the villa for Helen. How well I remember it! Helen and I were standing in the orchard together under the blossoming apple trees, when one of the servants brought it out to her.

" 'Of course, it must be from papa,' she said, tearing open the envelope, 'but how strange, he never sent me a telegram in his life before!'

"Her dark eyes glanced over it, then the smile died from her face and the light from her bonny eyes, and she grew pale as death.

" 'Helen! Miss Trevalyn!' I cried in alarm, 'I hope you have heard no bad news?' I would have given my life to have saved her a moment's pain.

" 'The news this telegram contains has broken my heart. It says my father has just married a young and beautiful girl, and that they have started on the 10:20 express for home,' she sobbed piteously. 'Oh Mr. Douglas! I—I—can hardly credit it. Do you really believe it is true?' and she handed me the telegram to read.

“ ‘Yes, it *must* be true, Miss Helen,’ I answered, as I read it, and handed it back to her.

“ ‘Home will never be the same to me again, after they come,’ she said, bravely stifling back her sobs. ‘If it had been a woman of his own age, perhaps I might not have minded so very much, Mr. Douglas, but oh! how could my father have married a *young girl* to fill my dear, dead mother’s place! I am sure she does not love him—how could a young girl love an old man?’

“I did my best to comfort her, advising her to look at the bright side of the affair.

“The squire and his young wife arrived late that afternoon, and on the next day I saw young Mrs. Trevalyn. When my eyes fell upon her, I was fairly rooted to the spot. I recognized her instantly as *Fifine*, the gay little Parisian who took London by storm, three or four seasons ago. You remember her, Montgomery, and the sensation she created, and the reputation she had of being as heartless as she was charming. Duels were fought for her, and fortunes lavished that impoverished princes.

“You can well understand my amazement, Montgomery, when the grand old haughty squire introduced *Fifine* to me as his wife.

“ ‘It cannot be possible that he does not know who and what she was,’ was the thought that flashed through my bewildered mind, and I felt hotly indignant that he had brought that creature to the villa to be the associate of Helen; for of course he knew—he must know, for every man in the habit of visiting London knew *Fifine*, at least by reputation. I determined to find out if such a thing could be possible—that he did *not* know.

“That evening when we were smoking our cigars together out on the porch,—out of hearing of the ladies,—I ventured the leading remark :—‘I cannot rid myself of



the thought that I have met your wife before, Squire; her face seems very familiar.'

He did not start, or look confused as I imagined he would.

" 'It is hardly probable,' he answered. 'Evelyn was governess to some little children; the family lived in the suburbs of Kent; she was never away from the town but one week in her life. That week she was visiting friends in London, and there by chance I met her. It was a case of genuine love at first sight with both of us, and we were married straightway, for the family she was living with intended going abroad that very week and taking her with them, she told me; so I secured my prize at once, Mr. Douglas,' he added, 'and I am very proud of my young wife.'

"How cleverly the old squire had been duped! But I felt incapable of the delicate task of unmasking the woman he had just wedded. No, no; let some one else's lips unfold the story to his incredulous ears.

"As you can readily imagine, Helen did not take to young Mrs. Trevalyn, and Fifine certainly had no love for her husband's haughty, beautiful young daughter. From the moment the young step-mother crossed the threshold she commenced as she meant to end,—played havoc with everything in and about the villa.

"Then commenced such a reign of extravagant expenditure that the good people of Branlea were not a little startled and anxious for the squire, and sorry for Miss Helen, and wondered how it would end. Young Mrs. Trevalyn entertained royally. Her *fêtes* would have paid the price of a king's ransom. Her jewels were the finest money could buy, and her dresses were the envy of even duchesses. Her equipages were magnificent, and her yacht the talk of the whole country around. It seemed that the fond old squire could refuse her nothing; the

idolatry he lavished upon her was something marvellous to those that witnessed it. And, while his love for his young wife increased, the chasm widened between himself and his only child.

"One day I found Helen sobbing under the trees. In a moment I was by her side, kneeling in the long grass at her feet.

" 'Helen!' I cried hoarsely, 'you are not happy here. Let me take you away from this place. I love you—be my wife!' I like to look back on that scene, and remember, how after long pleading, I won from my darling the shy acknowledgment that she *did* care for me, and when I left her that evening, and walked home in the starlight, the happiest heart that ever beat in a man's breast beat in mine, for Helen had promised to be my bride, as soon as I returned for good from the army.

"The days that passed during the next four weeks were to me like a dream of heaven. I spent much time with Helen, planning for our future,—where we should live and where we should go on our honeymoon, and talking over the hundred and one all absorbing things that interest betrothed lovers.

"At this important epoch of our lives, young Mrs. Trevalyn invited friends down from London for a few weeks sojourn, and among them was the Earl of Dunraven. I trembled for the old squire when I heard that, for I remembered that when Fifine first came to London Dunraven was her most devoted cavalier, and that she was desperately fond of him was no secret.

" 'How would it end?' I asked myself, and a sudden consciousness of gloom seemed to oppress my heart. It was the coming event in the background, which cast its dark, grim shadow over the future.

"But the trouble I had foreseen with the coming of Dunraven, for the squire's young wife, took another and

a more alarming shape ; he fell desperately in love with —my Helen. That Helen was betrothed to me, did not seem to affect his infatuation for her in the least ; and her evident dislike for him, and avoidance of him on every possible occasion, only seemed to give the more zest to his determination to win her from me.

“Matters grew so desperate at last that I challenged him to a duel, despite Helen’s tears and entreaties not to put myself in his power.

“To my surprise the wealthy earl sent back word that he declined to meet me, for the reason that he was a dead shot, and that it was really a pity to take from me my life as well as my sweetheart.

“When I received that word, in the heat of my passion I swore before my friends if he would not meet me in honorable combat that I should feel myself justified in killing him on sight ! I found too, that young Mrs. Trevalyn was bitterly opposed to Dunraven’s infatuation for her beautiful, haughty step-daughter, and the first kindly feeling that ever stirred in my heart for her, went out to her for that ; although I knew it was only prompted by jealousy. No woman is pleased to see an old lover interested in another face, even though he is beyond her reach forever, so strange is a woman’s heart. To hide her wounded feelings, young Mrs. Trevalyn plunged still deeper into the whirlpool of social gayeties, and I noticed now that the old squire began to look very troubled.

“But surely it was not because he had discovered that Dunraven was an old friend of his wife’s, for the squire and the earl were the greatest of friends, and inseparable companions.

“I saw but one way of ending Dunraven’s determination to win Helen, and that was to marry my darling at once and take her away, and, as every throb of

my darling's heart was for me, she consented, bless her !

"At this time, Squire Trevalyn was taken violently ill, and his best friends were denied admittance to the sick-room, all save Dunraven.

"I felt that I had every right to be admitted to the squire's presence, and my consternation was great to find myself refused admittance at the very threshold of his apartment by one of the servants, and to hear that it was the squire's request that I should not enter.

"Even Helen was invisible during the three days that followed, despite my earnest notes declaring that I counted the long dragging hours until I should see her and clasp her dear white hands in mine.

"Suddenly, to my great joy and relief, Helen sent for me one afternoon, and I hastened quickly to the villa. I was shown by the servant into the drawing-room. I looked eagerly around. No graceful form sprang from behind the velvet portière to meet me with outstretched hands, no rosy, blushing face was turned expectantly from the sunlit window ; the room was quite empty.

" 'Tell Miss Helen I am here,' I said impatiently. Half an hour passed, yet Helen did not make her appearance ; but presently I heard light footsteps, and I knew it was Helen, for her approach was always heralded by the faint odor of violets.

"I sprang from the sofa on which I had been seated and advanced to meet her with eager warmth and open arms, but to my surprise she shrank from me with a pained, scared face.

" 'You must not touch me, Arthur,' she whispered, standing before me white as a marble statue.

"My arms fell motionless by my side. Was I mad, or dreaming ? Had I heard aright ? I asked myself, looking wonderingly at her.

“‘Arthur,’ she murmured piteously, raising those lovely dark eyes to my face, ‘I have that to tell you which must be told quickly, and you must believe too that it is no jest; every word comes from the depths of my heart. It is this, Arthur; *you and I must part*. I give you back your betrothal ring, for your bride I can never be.’

“Ah, me! how soon Dead Sea fruit is turned to ashes at our touch. A great poet has said :

“ ‘Pleasures are like poppies spread—  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed ;  
Or like the borealis trace—  
That flits ere you can paint the place ;  
Or like the snowflakes on the river,  
A moment white, then gone forever.’—

“‘Helen,’ I said slowly and with great emotion, ‘do you remember the lines of an old poem we read together in a book a few days since? Do you wish me to repeat them and apply them to you?’

“ ‘Good-bye forever, my darling,  
Dear to me even now,  
Though I give you back your promise  
And release you from your vow!  
I have learned that the love I sought for  
Had been given away before,  
And I know that love in your nature  
Is “love forevermore.”  
Yet I wish you had not answered  
In words so tender and fair,  
For I could have borne it better,  
Though it had been hard to bear,  
If you had but told me truly  
That your heart was given for aye,  
I should not have known the sorrow  
That crushes my soul to-day.

- “ ‘ Yet why should I weakly blame you  
For the thoughts in my bosom hid?  
’Twas my own fond heart that led me  
To love you as I did,  
And now I must hide my sorrow  
As I hid my hope before,  
And put it away in silence  
To be spoken of no more ;  
For, since I know I possess not  
The love that had been such prize,  
Shall I wait till my idol crumbles  
To ashes before my eyes ?  
No, rather farewell forever !  
And long may the love-light shine  
On the fairer path you have chosen—  
It will beam no more on mine.
- “ ‘ Better if Death had robbed me,  
For then I could love you still ;  
Your mem’ry would have nerved me  
To work with a stronger will.  
Now is my dream but a sorrow,  
And my heart hath a sense of shame,  
Rememb’ring the empty promise  
And the love that was only a name—  
Rememb’ring the flowers of joy  
That brought a fruition of pain,  
And the happiness that I held for an hour—  
I held it and lost it again.  
I embarked my soul’s best treasure  
To drift on a boundless sea ;  
I have gathered life’s fairest blossom—  
There will come no fruit for me ! ’ ”

## CHAPTER II.

SOME FIND LOVE A BLESSING, OTHERS, A CURSE.

“‘STOP!’ sobbed Miss Trevalyn, ‘you torture me, I cannot bear it!’ A thunderbolt falling from a clear sky, or a volcano suddenly bursting beneath my feet could not have shocked me more than the words that fell from Helen’s lips.

“‘It is quite true, Arthur,’ she repeated huskily, ‘we must part.’

“I looked at her in bewilderment. It was no girlish jest, I was beginning to comprehend; the sad, dark eyes, which had great circles under them, were too serious for that. Had she heard anything regarding me? I wondered. No, it could not be that; my life, thank Heaven, had been as clear and open as the page of a book.

“‘You are trying to get up a sensation to frighten me, my dear Helen, to test my love for you,’ I said quietly.

“‘Hush, Arthur!’ she cried, ‘it is quite true, oh believe me.’

“‘I think, Helen,’ I retorted, ‘that I need ask Heaven for patience; you have promised to be my wife, and now you tell me that some barrier has arisen between us to part us. You are cruel to me.’

“‘Hush, Arthur!’ she cried again, ‘I—I—cannot—bear it.’

“‘Helen, this is all nonsense,’ I declared impatiently, ‘I will not hear one word more. Nothing under Heaven

shall take you from me, I promise you, for I love you too well for that. I could not endure the *thought* even of life without you. You have agreed to be my wife, and not for anything in this world would I consent to release you, do, pray, plead, say what you will.'

"She only looked at me sadly, tears falling like rain down her pale cheeks, answering that it could never be.

"My anger overpowered me. 'You could never have loved me, Helen, or you would say with me, that nothing but death should ever part us,' I cried. 'Remember, I did not ask you for the happiness of a few years, the content of a few months; my whole life is at stake. If I lose you I would be adrift for life. But you would not do that, you would not have encouraged and accepted me if you had intended to throw me over.'

"I tried to take the little white hands in mine that were clutched so tightly together, but she resisted me.

"'You must try to believe me, Arthur,' she repeated piteously, 'we must part; but all through your life you will know that you have—my—my—liking—if not—my love,' she added faintly.

"I started back as though she had dealt me a heavy blow with one of those lily white slender hands, and a laugh that sounded hardly human even to my own ears, fell from my lips.

"'Your liking!' I repeated, with bitter anger, 'what word is that to give me? I ask for your love and you speak of liking! Sun and moon, heat and cold, night and day are not more opposite than love and liking. One is strong—the other weak. I ask you to answer me plainly. Have you deceived me? Have you encouraged me with false hopes, false smiles, false words, which you never meant?'

"'You frighten me, Arthur,' she said with quivering



lips and tear wet eyes, 'you will be sorry in time to come that you have spoken so angrily to me.'

" 'I am sorry *now*,' I answered with hasty repentance. 'Can you not see, Helen, that I am half mad with wonder and dismay? But really, dear, you do not mean it, you cannot look at me and mean that we are to part!'

" 'I do mean it, Arthur,' she said, with pitiful bravery.

"I looked long and steadily into the white, beautiful face. 'Helen,' I cried, 'can you, whom I have believed little removed from the angels, be that most detestable of all women—a coquette? You have made yourself the sunshine of my life, won from me the deepest love that a man can give to a woman. You have taken my whole heart from me. You have made yourself a necessary part of my existence. And now you would have me believe that I am nothing to you.'

" 'I want an answer,' I went on sternly. 'I have a right to demand it. Tell me the truth, Helen. Have you purposely befooled me? Has it all been a farce, an actual lie? I cannot believe that you have been duping and deceiving me for this one end and aim. I ask you once again, my dear, take back the cruel words you have uttered. Look up into my face and tell me that our betrothal shall be broken only by the stronger, more holy, more beautiful tie, the marriage bond, which will give you to me to love and to cherish until death parts us. What is your answer, Helen?'

"She took off her betrothal ring slowly and laid it in my hands.

" 'There is an insurmountable barrier between us, Arthur,' she said gravely. 'I can give you no other reason. Your path and mine lie widely asunder through life. Try to realize it.'

" 'You are my promised bride, and now you tell me some mysterious reason prevents you from marrying me.'

I repeat that Heaven must send me patience to listen to such words. You can have no such reason; such an argument seems weak and foolish. It is all a pretence or subterfuge. I am speaking harshly to you, Helen, I cannot help it. I love you too well to think of losing you with calmness.'

"Suddenly an idea came to me and I caught her arm in a strong grasp, so strong and fierce she could not turn from me and escape the earnest gaze of my searching eyes.

" 'Helen!' I cried hoarsely, 'answer me this: Have you dismissed me to make way for another lover?'

"She raised her beautiful face, white, with the pallor of death upon it, to mine.

" 'Yes,' she answered desperately, choking down a sob.

" 'Will you tell me the name of the man?' I asked, with a voice husky with suppressed emotion.

" 'I am to marry the Earl of Dunraven,' she answered, mechanically.

"I recoiled from her as though the words had stung me. I turned from her without another word and strode away with the heart in my bosom, colder, and heavier than a stone. My sorrow seemed too great, too severe to bear. I took the little golden circlet she had worn, and which I still held clenched in my hand, and threw it far from me with a laugh that sounded like nothing human.

" 'Thus do I fling away Helen Trevalyn's love,' I cried. 'She has blasted my life, but I am not the first man whose life has been wrecked by a woman.'

"On the very next day the report reached me that at the end of a fortnight, Helen was to marry the Earl of Dunraven.

"In this long letter,—the last one I shall ever write you, Montgomery,—I have kept to plain facts, that you

may not be misled in your judgment of the crime which followed, and of which I am accused. What would it avail me now to keep the truth back? Nothing. But let me continue.

"This report, which I knew was but too true, almost drove me mad. How can I describe the fortnight that followed. I plunged with a recklessness that surprised even myself into vice. I drank myself into forgetfulness, and for days and nights the happening of the world about me seemed like a dazed dream. If there be a hell blacker than that into which I plunged body and soul, man has not dreamed of it, nor language painted it.

"Weird imageries filled my brain, a thousand times more horrible than those which haunted the brain of poor Poe. One great desire seized me,—the longing to throttle the man who had won from me the only object that made life worth the living—to crush with my own hands the foul life out of him, and send his soul with all its blackness, down to Hades, for the fiends to gloat over

"But the days did not linger; they seemed to fly swift winged from me, and at last Helen's wedding day dawned.

"All the night before I had paced the floor of my room like one demented. I called so often for brandy and soda, that the servant who answered my summons grew alarmed

"‘I beg your pardon for making so bold as to speak to you about this, sir,’ he said, earnestly, ‘but really, Mr. Douglas, I fear for you—you are taking too much.’

"I raised my right arm and felled him to the floor for his impertinence in daring to criticise my actions.

Bring what I require, and make no comments,’ I cried, hoarsely, and the man hastened to do my bidding.

"How I passed this day of all others seems like a con-

fused dream to me when I look back at it. I must have imbibed heavily, for unconsciousness—a draught from the waters of Lethe—overpowered me, and the shades of night had fallen when I awoke and realized that the hour was soon approaching which would see my Helen another's bride. What pen can portray the agony of that thought. An insane desire came to me to try to prevent the marriage even at the eleventh hour.

“Oh! if I could but see Helen once more—only a moment—God! how I would plead with her to abandon Dunraven and fly with me!

“Full of this thought I caught up a pen and wrote a note to her, and these were the words of it:—

“‘MY DARLING HELEN:—This infamous marriage with Dunraven must not—shall not take place to-night. I *cannot* give you up. The very thought of it makes me desperate. God only knows what power Dunraven holds over you, to force you, whose heart is wholly mine, into this accursed marriage. I cannot understand it. Helen, in heaven's name reflect upon what you are about to do before it is too late. No good will come of it. Mark well my words. I passed him by on the street yesterday and the insolent smile on his lips as his eyes met mine almost drove me to madness. I felt like slaying him. Helen, come down to the south gate; I *must* see you, if but for one moment. If you fail me, remember *whatever happens will be all your fault.*

“‘Your loving, devoted, but desperate

“‘ARTHUR.’

“I concluded to take it to the villa myself and bribe one of the maids to put it into Helen's hand.

“How my hands trembled as I put on my hat. My courage failed me and my heart sank—there was so much at stake,—so much to be won—or lost!

“To steady my nerves I poured out a glass of brandy and swallowed it at a single draught. It made my heart

glow, and diffused warmth through my whole frame, and before I left the room I took another and another yet,—and hurried from the house. A dim realization came to me of what a beautiful night it was, as I walked along. Many a time had I walked with Miss Trevalyn under the trees on just such moonlight nights.

“‘Should I never walk with her there again?’ the agonizing thought seemed to turn my brain to fire as it shot through it. A sort of frenzy seized me as I reached the villa and saw how it was illumined from garret to basement. I stood quite still, leaning my arms on the post of the south gate, and looked and listened intently. Such strange fancies came to me, the wind murmuring and sighing among the pines seemed to whisper: ‘Miss Trevalyn’s bridal eve,’—the crickets chirping in the long grass seemed to be telling each other about it.

“One of the maids chanced to pass that way—she must have been a new attaché of the house, I never remembered having seen her face before. I bribed her to take the note to Miss Trevalyn.

“It seemed to me that I stood for centuries at the old south gate waiting for Helen to come to me; but the moments dragged their slow lengths by, still no Helen came.

“I opened the gate and walked with unsteady steps up to the house. The ground seemed undulating under my feet, and as I walked along, I often struck out my hand and grasped at the rose branches to steady my feet, but I did not feel the pain of the long, sharp thorns.

“A clock in an adjacent belfry pealed slowly the hour of seven, and I realized it was an hour yet to the time appointed for the ceremony. I walked slowly around the house, without aim or object, pulling my coat collar up about my neck and my slouch hat over my eyes that I

might escape recognition if any one of the servants should chance to pass me by.

"The wedding guests had long since begun to arrive, and soon, a large concourse of people had assembled. I knew that by the babble of voices. There was a small room off from the drawing-room that opened out upon the terrace. A rear stairway connected it with Helen's apartments and it was set aside for her use.

"Some subtle instinct drew me thither. I peered into the room from the window, through the thick net-work of interlacing vines, and I saw Helen in her bridal dress there. I tried to call out to her, but my tongue seemed paralyzed. I heard with vivid distinctness all that passed within the room, for the window was open. I did not intend to do such a dastardly thing as to listen, because the thick vines screened me out there in the darkness, but some subtle, irresistible power held me spellbound. I had not the power to move away or make my presence known, even though I was so near my Helen—mine alas! no longer.

"Rachel, Miss Trevalyn's maid, was with her; she was talking with her, saying earnestly:

"'Oh, Miss Helen, do not weep so bitterly; all the wedding guests will see, even through your bridal veil, how red and swollen your eyes are. I entreat you, for appearance' sake, Miss Helen, try—*try* to calm yourself.'

"And as she spoke, Rachel bent pityingly over the slim figure half buried in the depths of the large, plush arm-chair, and attempted to gently but firmly remove the girl's hands from her lovely, tear-stained face.

"A bit of printed paper fluttered from Helen's lap to the girl's feet. Rachel picked it up, and glanced at it. 'Poetry,' she said, stopping short under the chandelier, and murmuring the verses half aloud. As they fell on my

strained ear, I recognized them as lines I had sent to Helen in other days. How cruelly the words stabbed my heart as I listened to them out there in the darkness.

“ ‘Tis sweet to feel in this sad world of change,  
 Where selfishness and pride so much abound,  
 That there is one, however wide we range,  
 To greet us lovingly when home is found—  
 One whom we know will faithful be till death,  
 Whose heart-throbs play in concert with our own,  
 Whose love will bless us till our latest breath,  
 To whose pure bosom falseness is unknown.

“ The famished wretch who droops his head with shame,  
 May be relieved by any passer-by ;  
 The ardent youth who hungers after fame,  
 Has always hope of feasting presently.  
 But, oh, to feel that we are all alone,  
 That love's sweet cup has vaporized to the lees,  
 That there is no heart we can call our own—  
 This is a hunger nothing can appease.

“ To wander on without a ray of hope,  
 To find no respite even in our sleep,  
 Life's sun extinguished, in the dark to grope,  
 And hopeless through this world to creep ;  
 No balm for us, no medicine can cure—  
 The ailing is beyond the reach of art—  
 All other hunger strong men may endure,  
 Except the weary, dreary hunger of the heart.’

“ Rachel looked at Helen with great compassion on her rugged face.

“ No one in this wide world had more cause for tears. ‘ I am to marry *one* man to-night, while every throb of my heart is *another's*,’ moaned Helen, rocking herself to and

fro, adding desperately in a low, choking voice : ‘Death would not be so hard for me to face.’

‘ ‘Can nothing be done to avert the marriage?’ queried Rachel, shivering. ‘It is awful to stand at the altar with a man if you feel like that in your heart toward him,’ she added bluntly. The many years she had spent in the service of the family, gave Rachel the privilege of expressing her mind freely when she chose.

“ ‘There is only one thing that could save me,’ replied Helen hoarsely, and with an hysterical laugh more cruel to hear than the bitterest of sobs ; ‘only one thing, my death or Hector Dunraven’s within the hour, and as neither the one or the other is likely to happen my fate is sealed.’ And as she spoke she rose from her chair and paced excitedly up and down the room, her bridal robes trailing after her.



## CHAPTER III.

### THE TRAGEDY IN TREVALYN PARK.

"As Helen paced the room rapidly to and fro she caught sight of her face reflected in the mirror, as she passed it, and stopped short,—its ghastliness appalled her.

"She was aroused from her contemplation by a light tap at the door. It was one of the servants bearing a huge bouquet of white roses, with Mr. Dunraven's card attached. I knew it must be from him.

"Helen Trevalyn turned away from it with a shudder. Still the girl at the door lingered.

"'What do you want, Sara?' she asked impatiently.

"'If you please, Miss Helen,' began the girl, gliding up to her side and speaking in a low whisper: 'there is a man at the south gate who declares he must see you if only for a moment. 'It is imperative,' he bade me say. I told him this was your wedding night and that you was dressing for the ceremony. With that he grasped my arm so tightly that I cried aloud with the pain of that iron clutch.

"'Give Miss Trevalyn this,' he said, thrusting a note into my hand, 'and tell her I will wait for my answer here.'

"The girl did not add that I had given her a pound note to insure the quick delivery of the message.

"Helen's white hand closed quickly, tremblingly, over the envelope, and the next moment the girl Sara had quitted the room.

“‘Rachel,’ said Miss Trevalyn, turning nervously to her maid, ‘leave me for a little while. I will ring for you when I want you.’

“For some moments after the door had closed upon Rachel she stood by the mantel, her head resting on her trembling hands, her heart beating with emotion, I was quite sure. She knew the writing but too well. As soon as she could command herself sufficiently, she tore open the envelope and drew forth the note, and slowly she read it through—once—twice. She looked very pale.

“‘I cannot see him again,’ she sobbed under her breath, ‘it would make both of us but the more unhappy.’

“‘Poor Arthur, my poor boy! he wants to make a last appeal to me against this marriage, but it would be quite useless, for it must go on, though it breaks both Arthur’s heart and mine. No: it is best not to see Arthur again.’

“The little ormolu clock on the mantel chimed the hour of seven, warning Helen that time was swiftly passing. There was another tap at the door. She thrust the note in the pocket of her dress, and in answer to her, ‘Come in,’ her father entered.

“With a little cry Helen sprang to his side, and flinging her arms about his neck hid her face on his breast.

“‘Helen,’ said Squire Trevalyn, tremulously, eagerly, ‘do you think it will be for the best, dear? *It is not too late yet to stop this marriage if you think—*’

“‘Hush, papa!’ interrupted the girl, laying her white fingers over his lips, and bravely keeping back the sobs. ‘I will marry the Earl of Dunraven.’

“‘I am not worth the sacrifice, Helen,’ he muttered weakly. ‘I should not permit you to make it. I am a rich man, but all my gold will not buy him off. Oh,

Helen, Helen! your sacrifice is horrible to me, but would it not be more horrible still if the world knew that I—that I—'

"Squire Trevalyn stopped short and looked at his daughter. His face was convulsed with agony; he was utterly incapable of finishing the sentence.

" 'Would to God Dunraven and I had never met,' he cried hoarsely; 'he has been my evil genius,' and with that the old squire laid his head on Helen's shoulder and wept like a child.

" 'Helen,' he whispered, raising his head suddenly, 'I am going to make a last appeal to Dunraven to-night to spare you. I will watch for him at the gate and talk to him in the grounds where no one can hear what passes between us; walls have ears, servants always listen.'

" 'Oh, father,' sobbed Helen, 'it would be useless; there would only be but another quarrel between you and Mr. Dunraven.'

"The squire tore her white arms from his neck, and, heedless of her entreaties to keep out of Dunraven's path hurried from the room with a white face and clenched hands, and with a look of such utter desperation in his eyes that it haunted her for many a long and bitter day afterward.

" 'Hector Dunraven will only mock poor papa for his pains,' sobbed Helen; 'he is as relentless as death itself,' and with those words Helen abruptly left the room, and that broke the icy chain that seemed to bind my senses.

"I think I called out to her, but my memory is much confused on this point,—then suddenly I turned from the window and crept down the path. I took my clasp knife from my pocket, to cut one of the branches of the bushes to whittle—you know that is a habit of mine when

under great excitement. I held the knife clutched tightly in my hand, when, glancing ahead I saw the Earl of Dunraven walking swiftly up the path.

"In an instant all the blood in my body rushed to my crazed brain; my head whirled. I stood quite still in the shadow of a tall tree and watched him approaching me—nearer—nearer—nearer—an instant more and the man who had robbed me of that which was dearer than my heart's blood would be abreast of me; we would stand face to face in the impenetrable darkness of the huge trees.

"God! how my head whirled. A score or more Earls of Dunraven seemed advancing, but I felt brave, my blood was on fire. I could face an army of them! How triumphant and devilish all the faces seemed as they drew nearer—nearer, whirling with lightning like rapidity around me."

"Then there followed a horrible blank in my mind. Time stood still; the brandy by this time had fully overcome me. As God in Heaven is my judge, I do here most solemnly swear that I have no recollection of any incident whatever that happened after that.

"Hours afterward, I found myself on the platform of the depot. It was still night. I saw a train approaching and boarded it. I did not know which way it was going—it was of little moment to me. I went to the extreme end of the route which was at this little hamlet.

"As I stepped from the train I bought a London paper, and with trembling hands turned toward the column containing the marriage notices, and as I did so, I noticed that which had entirely escaped my notice before—*there was a heavy stain of blood on the palm of my left hand*, but my mind was too much absorbed by other matters to pay any heed to this fact just now, for a head-

line in the paper, so startling that it fairly took my breath away, caught my eye. It read:—

“‘THE DASTARDLY MURDER OF A BRIDEGROOM ON HIS BRIDAL EVE BY A JEALOUS RIVAL.’

“It is useless to enter into detail regarding the four column article. In substance it was to the effect that the Earl of Dunraven had been found dead in Trevalyn Park on the preceding night, near one of the tall sycamore trees in the walk that led to the south gate, half an hour after the time appointed for his marriage to Miss Helen Trevalyn, daughter of Squire Trevalyn, of Trevalyn Villa, and the greatest excitement had prevailed upon the finding of the body.

“A few were of the opinion that the deceased had committed suicide, owing to the fact that a knife was found by his side; while others were firm in the belief that a murder most foul had been committed.

“The doctor who was called to view the remains found a wound caused by a knife, six inches from right to left, extending across the throat to a point under the left ear; the upper portion of the windpipe was severed, and the jugular vein, as well as the muscular branches of the carotid artery, were divided.

“The doctor was emphatic in his belief that the wound had not been self-inflicted. Had it been so, the hand inflicting so peculiar a wound could not have escaped being marked with blood. The knife was found near the *right* hand in such a position as to indicate that it had fallen from it. The arms were folded across the chest, the right hand resting on the left,—*the back of the knife being toward the person of the deceased.* There was no blood on the hands, arms, or chest.

“‘All the circumstances concurred in showing,’ the doctor held, ‘that an attempt had been made to make this

appear an act of suicide, for neither during nor after the cessation of rigidity, could this spasmodic condition of the muscles of the hand be simulated. In no case,' he insisted, 'was it possible to give an appearance of grasping similar to that which is occasionally found after death as a result of cadaveric spasm and rigidity, and last, but by no means least, from the very position of the wound, he stated emphatically that the fatal gash had been inflicted *by a person holding the knife in his left hand.*'

"Then the serving maid confessed to receiving a note from a stranger at the south gate within that hour for Miss Trevalyn, and one of the grooms about the place revealed the fact that he had seen me standing under the very tree before which the body was found, a little while before, cutting a branch from the tree. He could not be mistaken about my identity for he knew me well. And they wrung from my poor Helen's lips that the note handed her, was from me.

"And thus was the stigma of murder fastened upon me, from circumstantial evidence most damningly clear.

"And now, Montgomery, dear, faithful, tried and true old friend, I reach the culminating point of my letter—aye, my confession :—

"I say solemnly, and call God to witness the truth of my words,

"I do not know whether my hand is stained with a fellow-creature's life-blood—*or—not*. I have not the faintest knowledge of what transpired from the moment I saw the Earl of Dunraven advancing up the path, until I found myself at the railway depot, boarding the train.

"By the memory of my sainted mother, now in Heaven, and all I hold dear in this world, and by my hope of salvation in the next, I solemnly call God to witness the truth of my assertion when I say, I believe myself to be innocent of this foul crime.—innocent as a babe, and yet,

Heaven pity me, *I am not sure*, and this hell of conflicting doubt into which my soul is plunged is driving me to madness.

"One of two fates is before me ; the madhouse—or—the gallows. I cannot live and suffer the one or face the other.

"I have bought a revolver, and within the hour after the ink is dry upon this page, my soul will be ushered into eternity, and God may reverse the verdict of man as to whether I am innocent or guilty.

"Good-by, old school-fellow, good-by, old comrade, who has stood by me on the battle-field in many a fierce encounter. Good-by, faithful friend, whose face is before me, earnest with sympathy, in this the last hour of my life. I meant to write but a page, but my thoughts flowed so freely that I have covered many pages. I have but one request in conclusion to make, and that is, judge me not too harshly, temper mercy with justice, and when you think of me,—if ever,—always think of me kindly and at my best, even though my sun has set in eternal darkness.

"Yours through time and eternity,

"ARTHUR DOUGLAS."

The young man signed his name to the above long letter with a steady hand, sealed and addressed it ; then drew another blank sheet toward him, and commenced the following in a hand that trembled slightly :

"MY DEAREST HELEN :—

But fate destined that he should get no further ; his elbow accidentally touched the trigger of the revolver lying on the table, there was a deafening report, a flash, and he fell forward, face downward, on the table, his life-blood crimsoning the letter he had but just commenced, and holding the pen still in his hand.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A STRANGE BRIDAL EVE.

THE deafening report of the revolver brought the inmates of the hostelry with alacrity to the stranger's door. They found it not only securely locked, but bolted upon the inside. Three or four of the strongest men put their shoulders to the paneling and the next instant it had fallen in with a crash, and they sprang over the threshold into the room, and even the stoutest hearted of them shrank back at the sight that met their gaze.

"There is life here yet," exclaimed the old innkeeper, when he had torn open the stranger's coat and vest and applied his ear over the region of the heart. "It still beats; we must send for a doctor at once."

When the village doctor arrived, and had examined his patient, he looked grave enough. "The man has missed death by a hair's breadth," he said, "and I am by no means certain that it will not prove fatal within the next twenty-four hours; the wound is an ugly one."

There were no cards, no papers about the stranger to prove his identity, and it was deemed best to send a telegram to the party indicated on the envelope of the sealed letter acquainting him of the facts, retaining the letter for possible identification. The dispatch was accordingly sent, and late that night, a gentleman who stated that he was Eugene Montgomery, arrived at the hostelry.

The letter was handed him, and as he perused page after page his grief over his friend's trouble and the rash-



ness of the act which culminated it, knew no bounds. "I shall remain with him until he is out of danger—or dies," he said hoarsely; adding, "Pray do not let this affair be noised about." They noticed that Mr. Montgomery always alluded to the injured man as 'my friend,' but particularly avoided mentioning his name.

He did not die, however, at the expiration of the time designated by the doctor, and for days thereafter his life hung suspended by a single thread as it were. We will leave him fighting the battle of life or death and return to the scene he pictured so vividly in his letter as having transpired that fatal night at Trevalyn Park in Branlea.

When the body of the Earl of Dunraven was discovered beneath the sycamore tree, the household was thrown into great trouble and confusion. When the announcement was made that the wedding would not take place, most of the guests left the villa without being aware of the true cause.

Miss Trevalyn first heard the terrible intelligence of Dunraven's tragic fate from her maid's lips. She stood quite still, looking at Rachel with a face pale as marble, her hands clutched together so tightly that the pink nails sunk deep in the tender palms, but she never felt the pain of it, her agitation was so great.

"Does—does—papa know about it?" she asked in an awful whisper.

"It was he who sent me to tell you about it, Miss Helen.

"Where is papa?" asked Miss Trevalyn in that same low, intense voice.

"In his study," replied Rachel.

"I am going to him, Rachel," said Miss Trevalyn, and all heedless that she wore her bridal veil and wedding dress still, she hurried precipitately from the room and down the long corridor. Pausing breathless before her

father's study, she knocked nervously, but there was no response, although she could hear her father's step pacing up and down within. She turned the knob, but the door was securely fastened from within.

"Father," she called, "let me in, it is I—Helen."

Cautiously the bolt was slid back after long moments of anxious waiting and Squire Trevalyn opened the door. A cry of terror broke from the girl's lips as her eyes fell on her father's face, it was haggard and ghastly. Years passing over him could not have aged him more completely than the havoc of the last hour had done.

"Come into the room and close the door after you, Helen," he said in a whisper; "be sure and close the door tight."

The girl obeyed.

"Oh, papa, is it quite true,—are you *sure* there is no mistake,—is the Earl of Dunraven really dead?"

"Yes," he answered, sinking tremblingly in the nearest seat, "yes, he is dead—and you—will—not have to marry him now."

Helen raised her tear stained face. "Papa," she whispered slowly, "who did it?"

"Who did it?" he repeated vaguely, "why, how should I know, child!—Don't look at me in that searching way, Helen; you unnerve me."

Helen threw herself on her knees before her father and caught his hands in hers. "Oh heaven, papa! are you *sure* you do not know who did it?" she sobbed wildly. "Tell me, confide in me."

"You will not have to marry him now, Helen," he muttered, "*you are saved!*"

It was true Helen Trevalyn had not loved the man she was to have wedded within that hour. She had often prayed that she might die and be freed from him; but she had never desired his death. She repelled the

thought that this tragedy, so terrible in itself, brought freedom too her. She was too genuinely shocked to feel that relief had been brought to her by so atrocious an act.

"Did you see the Earl of Dunraven after you left me, as you declared you intended doing, papa," whispered the girl, in a voice that sounded hardly human.

"Hush, my dear, hush!" cried the squire, "you will arouse the whole house talking so loud. No one must hear, Helen. Go and see if there are no servants prying about the corridor, or listening at the key-hole, and I will tell you about it."

"There is no one listening, papa," replied Helen, huskily; adding, "Your servants are above playing the part of so mean a thing as an eavesdropper."

"It is the servants who always betray family secrets," he muttered. "They must not hear what I say to you to-night, Helen. Look into the corridor and be sure that there is no one about; then come back and listen to what I have to say."

To gain time, to collect her scattered senses as well as to humor him, Helen obeyed, opened the door and looked up and down the corridor, then re-entered the room, closing it, and relocking it, and taking her place once more on the hassock at her father's feet, she laid her trembling little hand on his arm. "Papa," she said gently, "there is something terribly wrong; won't you confide in me?"

Squire Trevalyn raised his gray, haggard face, and looked into the beautiful, pleading, girlish one.

"Oh, if I dared tell you, Helen," he moaned huskily. "But no, it must not be; your verdict might be against me, you might hate me and that would kill me!"

He rose abruptly from his chair, and paced hurriedly up and down the length of the room, with his hands clenched, and great drops of moisture gathering on his

brow; then as abruptly sank down in his chair again, covering his face with his trembling hands, and, strong man though he was, he bowed his head and wept like a child.

"Oh, Helen, if I dared confide in you, child," he repeated, adding earnestly, "though the whole world should turn against me, would you be true—steadfast and true?" he asked hoarsely.

Turning her beautiful eyes upon him she answered, "Yes."

"If you will register a vow to me that you will never divulge one word of what I may say to you here and now, I will tell you my story," said Squire Trevalyn. "But you must swear to me that you will never repeat one word of it to any human being."

Pale and trembling, Miss Trevalyn looked at her father. "I am afraid," she said. "I have never sworn in all my life. Let me promise that I will do as you wish, papa. That will meet the case as well. I shall keep my word."

"No, you must swear it, Helen. For the rest of my life I shall trust no one—neither man, woman or child. Every promise made me shall be bound by an oath; you need not tremble, child, many people take oaths."

"But if I should ever have cause to break it?" the girl asked piteously.

"That is the very thing," he said. "How could I be sure of your eternal silence when you are not even sure of yourself? You must swear not to reveal one word of my story under any cause or circumstances; then I shall rest content, for you will always bear in mind the punishment that will follow if you do not keep your oath."

The girl's fair face grew as pale as the petals of a white lily. "If you cannot trust even me (who would die for you) without an oath, I—I—will take it, papa," she said slowly. And he was satisfied.

"You are sure there is no one listening, outside, Helen?" he asked anxiously. "A chance word, overheard, might ruin me, child," he gasped, and she saw him tremble like an aspen leaf.

"Quiet sure, papa," she said.

"Let me look down into your beautiful eyes, and it will give me power to proceed, my darling," he said tremulously. He took her little cold hands in his, caressing them a moment in utter silence.

"I hardly know how to begin, Helen," he said huskily, "but I suppose it is the better way to break into the subject at once."

"Yes, that is the best way, papa," Miss Trevalyn agreed.

He laid one trembling hand on the dark, curly head, looking wistfully down into those beautiful dark eyes.

"You have promised to trust and believe in me," he said solemnly, "no matter what comes, no matter how great the shock!"

"I shall always believe in you, papa," she answered, just as solemnly. "My affection is as true as steel, as faithful as the unswerving magnet to the pole, I say with Moore :

"Come, rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,  
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still here.  
Here still is the smile that no cloud can o'ercast ;  
And a heart and a hand all thy own to the last.

"Oh, what was love made for, if 'tis not the same,  
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame?  
I know not, I care not, if guilt's in thy heart,  
I know that I love thee whatever thou art.

"Thou hast called me thine angel in moments of bliss,  
And thine angel I'll be, 'mid the horrors of this ;  
Through the furnace unshrinking thy steps to pursue,  
And shield thee, and save thee, or perish there too.'

"God bless you, my beautiful daughter," murmured the squire, crushing back the great lump that rose in his throat. After a moment's pause, he went on slowly :—

"You remember when I lay ill unto death and sent for you, Helen, telling you when you came to my bedside that the Earl of Dunraven had asked your hand in marriage and that he held the power to cast me into prison if—if—you—refused?"

"How can I ever forget that hour, papa," the girl sobbed.

"I did not tell you *what* power Dunraven had over me, although you beseeched me on your knees to tell you, child, and, like the heroic daughter you are, you offered yourself as a sacrifice, darling," said the squire tremulously, "trusting blindly to my word that it was the only thing that would save me. The hour is come in which I must make a clean confession, Helen,—but, oh, child, try not to despise your poor father, but think as kindly of him as you can.

"My trouble dates back to three weeks ago to-night, my darling, and—and—I would give my very life's blood to blot it out.

"But to get at the root of the matter, dear,—we—we—have been living *very* extravagantly of late, and rich man though I was, the constant drain was beginning to tell upon my purse. I found to my great consternation one day that I was on the verge of bankruptcy, Helen, and the terror of the revelation drove me nearly distracted. I could not sleep or rest at night with the horror of impending evil hanging over me, and—and I took chloral, my darling, to deaden my senses into forgetfulness.

"One night, soon after I had taken the usual amount, one of the servants announced the Earl of Dunraven, on

particular business. I, knowing my condition, should have refused to see him, but in that one instance I did not, and on this one thread hangs all the misery we are enduring now. To make a long story short I ordered that the earl should be shown to the library, and in a little while I joined him there. I took a little more than the usual amount of chloral to brace up my nerves, and went down to meet him. The overdose instead of making me restful, as usual, produced quite an opposite effect upon me. I had not been in the earl's presence long ere he drew from me by adroit questioning the whole story of my indebtedness and the slippery precipice on which I stood."

" 'Why suffer such embarrassment when a few strokes of the pen will gain you comfort,' whispered Dunraven in my ear. 'You have wealthy partners; why not use them to tide you over your present difficulty?'

" 'They are prospecting on my land for a vein of ore,' I muttered; 'if they strike it, I shall be a rich man for life, if not—'

" 'Always look on the bright side of a question,' suggested Dunraven; and against my better judgment I listened to him and consented to take a glass of wine with him. You know the old saying, my Helen,

" 'When wine is in, wit is out.'

"I have a distinct recollection of all that passed after that. Dunraven produced two blank notes, and by his persuasion, God pity me, I filled them out, attaching the names of each of my two partners to them, and with this forged signature thus obtained, Dunraven took his leave, carrying the checks with him.

"When my brain grew clearer I realized what I had done and I almost went mad with horror. I sent for Dunraven and begged him on my knees to give me back

the checks to which I had unwittingly forged my partners' names.

“ ‘There is one, and only one condition on which I will return them to you, intact,’ he said suavely, ‘and that is, to secure for me your daughter Helen’s hand in marriage. You can influence her to marry me, if you will. Refuse, and a felon’s cell awaits you for life ! ’ ”



## CHAPTER V.

### IS HE INNOCENT OR GUILTY?

HELEN TREVALYN listened to the squire's remarkable confession like a woman turned suddenly to marble.

Her face was as white as the wedding robe that trailed about her, as she cowered upon the hassock at his feet.

The squire wiped the beads of perspiration from his brow, and without waiting for his daughter to speak went on hurriedly :

"It seemed to me, Helen, when I listened to those words from Dunraven's lips, that disgrace and death would be easier to bear than accept his terms. Oh, child, you will never know, I cannot picture to you in adequate language the terrible battle I had with myself ere I could bring myself to the point of appealing to you to sacrifice yourself for a crime committed by me, and which I would rather have died than divulged to you. And while the preparations for the wedding went on and I noted day after day how the roses were fading from your cheek, Helen, and the light from your eyes, I felt as though I were going mad.

"Twice I pleaded with Dunraven to spare you, but he only laughed mockingly in my face."

"Hear me once for all, Squire Trevalyn, and hereafter let there be no repetition of this scene," he retorted threateningly. "I love your daughter, and all is fair in winning the woman you love. She should never have found happiness with another man. I would have slain

him at the very altar first. Be satisfied with the fact that you are giving her to a man who worships her.'

" 'Your love is but a curse to my Helen,' I cried hotly, 'for, God pity the girl, she loves another.'

" 'Even though she *hated* me I would not relinquish the power that will give her to me,' he declared vehemently, 'for I have all the future years of companionship, in which I hope to win her to care for me. Better actual hatred at the start, than indifference.'

" 'I have not lived a life of exile from all womankind, but I have been no worse, I dare say, than many a man of the world, despite the reputation I have gained, because I sunned myself in the smiles of pretty women as long as their faces pleased me. It will be with your daughter when we are wedded, as it was with the nymph who drew back her dainty skirts in horror, as the monster named sin sued for her favor. You know the rest. She found him

" 'A monster of such dreadful mien  
To be hated, need but to be seen,  
Yet, seen too oft, familiar with his face  
Is first endured—then pitied—then embraced.

In short, I have the hope that your daughter will end by adoring me, my dear squire,' he added mockingly.

" Oh, Helen, how can I tell you how I passed the days that followed up to this, your wedding night. I—I—could scarcely keep my hands from Dunraven's treacherous throat as he sat at my table, or walked by your side, and to-night—" A violent spasm shook the squire's frame, and for a moment he was incapable of further utterance.

Helen crept up to him closer still, in great alarm. She had never before seen her genial, cheery hearted father worked up to such a state of agitation.

"But what happened to-night, papa?" she sobbed pit-eously. "Tell me, did you meet Hector Dunraven when you left my presence a little while since, father? Oh, tell me!"

"I was getting to that, Helen," muttered the squire. "Yes, I met him. I went down the road a piece to watch for him, and at last my vigilance was rewarded. I saw his carriage whirling up the road, but before I had time to intercept it, it dashed through the entrance gate. I followed. As the earl stepped from the coach I touched him on the arm.

"'I should like a few words with you,' I said, and with a muttered imprecation, he went with me.

"'Now,' said he impatiently, as we turned into the secluded path that led through the sycamore grove, 'what is it, squire? You have chosen a poor time in which to expect me to spend time in talking with you. I am already late for the ceremony.'

"'I have brought you here to make a last appeal to you, Dunraven,' I cried.

"He put out his hand to thrust me aside with an insolent laugh. I caught his arm in a vise-like grip.

"'You shall listen to me,' I cried. 'Attempt to move from where you stand and I—I—will kill you,' I cried excitedly.

"Of what need to tell you all I said, darling! We had a bitter quarrel,—and—and—listen, Helen, I told him that he must leave the country within twenty-four hours or—or—that I would not be responsible after that, for I might kill him on sight.

"'I have always something about me with which to defend myself, Squire Trevalyn!' he retorted, and quick as a flash reached for something in his breast pocket, but I was quicker still, and felled him with one blow from my right arm, and then I—Great Heaven! Helen, what noise

was that?" exclaimed the old squire, quivering with terror.

"It was nothing, papa, only the leaves tapping against the window-pane," returned the girl.

"I tell you there *is* some one behind those silk curtains, Helen; run over to the window and see."

"Just to satisfy you, I will do so, papa, but you will see that there is no one there," said Miss Trevalyn, gliding quickly to the window, but as she reached it, she found to her terror, a man crouching behind the silken folds.

She did not shriek out, or utter any cry as many another young girl might have done. She simply said in a low, hoarse, intense voice:

"You are right, papa, there *is* a man here!"

"Some spy has overheard all that I have said to you, Helen," shrieked the squire, springing from his chair.

The man calmly came forward, holding up his hand with a gesture commanding silence,

"My presence here is easily accounted for, Squire Trevalyn," he said gravely. "I am a detective,—of the Scotland Yard force, of London. I had private business in Branlea, which accounts for my presence at this most opportune time in your village. I am the Mr. Harper whom you included with your friend Huxham among the wedding guests. I was present two hours since when the body of the Earl of Dunraven was found in the grounds, and immediately set on foot investigations on my own account to trace the murderer. I thought that I had every reason to fasten the crime upon a Mr. Arthur Douglas, and I stepped into the library a little while since to put the points together and lay out my plan for tracing his whereabouts, when you entered, and hastily dispatched a servant with the message that your daughter must come to you at once. I remained quiet through curiosity to see—without being seen—the young lady,

for whose sake one lover met death and the other wears the red stamp of Cain on his brow, when lo, your startling revelation held me spellbound. A chair moved at the most critical point of your narrative and my presence—which under the circumstances and in accordance with my calling was perfectly justifiable—was made known to you, and,” continued the detective fixing his piercing gray eyes on Squire Trevalyn’s death-white face, “at the aspect the case now assumes, it is for me to determine whether this murder was committed by Arthur Douglas,—or by yourself, Squire Trevalyn.”

A shriek from Helen caused Mr. Harper to realize that he had spoken too plainly. The girl had fallen face downward in her bridal robes at her father’s feet. But he was equal to the emergency. Quickly raising the girl in his arms, for the squire had sunk down helplessly on the nearest seat, incapable of speech or action, he laid her upon the settee and laved her face with ice-water, in the mean time hastily touching the bell.

“Your young lady has swooned,” he said to the servant who answered the summons. “Squire Trevalyn wishes you to take her to her room and summon her maid.”

“Master looks quite as much as if he needed attention as young Missis,” exclaimed the man. “Look, sir, the squire is in a fit!”

The detective was just quick enough in stretching out his right arm to keep the squire from falling.

“It is an apoplectic stroke,” he said hurriedly; “you are right, my man, a doctor must be summoned at once. I think I will take my leave at once. This is no time for the intrusion of strangers.”

A week rolled its slow length by ere Helen Trevalyn awoke to a realization of what was transpiring about her. She awoke to find herself in her own bed, with faithful Rachel bending over her.

"What is the matter, Rachel?" she asked, wondering, as she opened her great dark, lovely eyes, gazing in bewilderment around her. "Why am I here? Have I been ill? I have had such horrible dreams!" Then suddenly a cry rang sharply, piteously, through the room.

"O God! Rachel, I remember all that happened last night! Where is papa?"

"It was not last night that it happened, dearie," said old Rachel; "it was a week ago. You have been lying ill here ever since."

"But papa!" cried Helen, sitting up with bated breath in the bed. "Where is he?"

Rachel hid her face in her hands, but with all her strength Helen Trevalyn clutched at them and tore them from it.

"Tell me, Rachel," she said. "This suspense is *kill-*  
*ing* me."

"You are not strong enough to bear it, Miss Helen," cried Rachel, distressedly. "Oh, how am I to tell you!"

"Tell me quickly, Rachel," whispered Miss Trevalyn, in a voice that sounded like nothing human. Rachel took her poor little hands and stroked them pityingly.

"Your father, the squire, was taken very ill on that awful night, Miss Helen, and the doctor, who was sent for, says he is suffering from aberration of the mind. But it is only temporary, dear Miss Helen, believe that. He will be all right one of these days, never fear; the doctor bade me tell you that."

Helen Trevalyn sank back upon her pillow, uttering no moan—no cry. She had expected to hear Rachel say that her father had been arrested, charged with the murder of the Earl of Dunraven.

But was he guilty? Oh, God in heaven! how could

she harbor such a question in her heart and live. It almost seemed to take her breath from her body. And if her father were innocent, did not all the proofs, which she had heard the servants discussing on that fatal night, point to Arthur Douglas, the man she loved better than her own life, as Dunraven's slayer? Which did it? was the agonizing cry in her heart, which her lips dared not utter.

"And Arthur—Mr. Douglas—Rachel, have they found any trace of him?" she asked fearfully—eager, yet dreading the answer to her question.

"No," said Rachel, adding warmly, "though the whole world cried out, trumpet-tongued, that Master Arthur was guilty of that awful crime, I would not believe it. He loved you better than life itself, Miss Helen; but he loved honor better still. I feel sure in my heart that Arthur Douglas is innocent."

## CHAPTER VI.

### A STARTLING CONFESSION.

“ Let me go mad !  
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts ! If there should be  
No God; no heaven, no earth in the void world—  
The wide, grave, lampless, deep, unpeopled world.”

“ If this be all,  
And other life await us not, for one,  
I say, 'tis a poor cheat, a wretched failure,  
A stupid bungle ! I for one protest against it,  
And would hurl life back with scorn.”

“ RACHEL,” said Miss Trevalyn, controlling her quivering voice as best she could, “ help me to dress. I am going to papa.”

Rachel tries to combat this decision, for she knows how weak the girl is, and what a shock it will be to her to see her great, strong, cheery father sitting in his arm-chair babbling empty nothings.

“ Where is Mrs. Trevalyn ? ” asked Helen. “ Is—is—she with papa ? ”

Rachel's brows drew together in a deep frown. “ No ; madame left the villa this morning to recruit her health and strength, she said, by a little trip to the seashore. She declared that the excitement she has undergone for the last week, together with sitting up alternately with you and your father, as well as having the whole care of the house on her mind, has nearly driven her distracted



and that if she didn't go away she would be sure to fall sick too. But bless me, Miss Helen, it isn't true about her sitting up losing a minute's sleep on account of your poor pa or yourself—that's all talk, as the trained nurses we had will agree.

"I don't like to tell any tales, Miss Helen, but I do say that it was the scandal of the neighborhood as to how she took on about the Earl of Dunraven's death—quite as much as you, his intended bride, might have done—and the report was about that she and the earl were lovers once."

"Impossible!" murmured Helen.

"You would not think that if you had seen the way she took on when the body was brought into the drawing-room, throwing herself down on her knees beside it, and kissing the pale lips, and crying hysterically that she wished she could die too,—and she the squire's wife. It was shocking! Why, the doctor who came to examine the wound had to fairly drag her from the room by entreaties and coaxing."

Helen's beautiful face grew white and troubled as she listened. She scarcely knew what terrible denouement to look for next.

"I will go to papa, Rachel; help me to dress," she said; and finding her young mistress firm in her resolve, the maid complied.

Squire Trevalyn was sitting in his arm-chair on the porch, in the sunshine, she told Helen, and there Helen sought him, gliding swiftly to his side and clasping her arms about him, her tears falling like rain on his face. Ah, how greatly her father had changed during this terrible week, she thought, in agony too great for words. There was no smile of welcome for her, no word of loving greeting from his lips, and in the wondering glance of the eyes that met hers, there was no gleam of recognition.

"Oh, heaven! this is more than I can bear!" sobbed Helen wildly, as she flung herself on her knees before him and buried her face on the arm of his chair.

"Hush, my dear," muttered the squire, "you must not interrupt me, I say, the worst is yet to come; but you will never forsake me, you will shield me. There is some one listening, Helen. Go and lock the door and come back quickly and I will tell you all while I have the strength." The old squire would repeat these words over and over again. He never got further than that, and they filled Helen with the keenest terror.

Meanwhile, a great reward had been offered by the Earl of Dunraven's aged mother for the apprehension of her only son's murderer. "I will give half my fortune," she telegraphed to the chief magistrate of London, "to track the slayer of my son down, and see him expiate his crime upon the gallows,—aye, the whole of my fortune, if need be!"

"Mr. Harper, one of the cleverest men of the Scotland-Yard force is already at Branlea," remarked the inspector. "He will succeed if any one can."

At the end of his tenth day at Branlea, Mr. Harper sent a lengthy telegram in cipher to his superior officer, and the contents of it was a revelation to that gentleman, versed as he was in crime in all its forms in the great city of London.

Mr. Harper had certainly not been idle. Like a careful general he laid out the plan of his campaign, and went systematically about it. "By unearthing the murderer of the Earl of Dunraven I would be a rich man for life," he ruminated, rubbing his hands softly together, "but never before have I ever found so complicated a case as this"—and the same question that troubled Miss Trevalyn was ever upon his lips—which is the murderer of Dunraven, Arthur Douglas, or Squire Trevalyn? The circumstan-

tial evidence against either is most conclusive, or could it have been done by *a woman's hand*—and, if so, could it have been done by the same hand that penned a letter which Dunraven had received on the day he died?

On the night of the tragedy Mr. Harper had ascertained that the earl had been stopping at the village hostelry instead of at Trevalyn Villa, and, therefore, he found it a much easier task than he had at first believed it would be to gain access to the suite of rooms the earl had occupied, through his valet, John Burton, in the hope of finding a possible clew. The detective was about turning away in despair when his eye suddenly caught sight of a crumpled bit of paper, half-singed, lying in the cuspadore.

"Ha!" he said aloud, "what have we here?" and he smoothed out the twisted sheet, and found it to be a fragment of a letter, and evidently in a woman's handwriting. This was certainly an important find. He perused the bit of paper slowly, carefully—then held it out to the valet.

"Do you know who sent this letter to your master, and when he received it?" he asked, fixing his keen gray eyes on the man's face.

"An hour before he started for Trevalyn Villa," answered the man, "I found it on the floor of his room. It had been thrust in under the door, but I could not find out who had placed it there. I gave him the letter, and as he glanced at the writing on the envelope, a volley of curses fell from his lips. 'I am never to hear the last of this woman!' he said with a frown. 'There is an old, trite, and true saying, Burton, which is carrying its lesson home to me, and it is this—"The pleasant follies of our youth turn into scourges which lash us in after life." Never were truer words uttered by tongue or pen.'

"The frown deepened on his face as he read the letter.

dearest:

I call you by the old  
for the sake of other days.

I have written to you to  
grant me an interview  
I dare refuse me after  
it has passed between us.

For I write to warn you  
shall be no wedding at  
Lyn Hall tonight.

If you lead Mrs. Evelyn  
to the altar it will be over  
my dead body.

My curse is that I love you  
I'll say better than my life.  
Under these lines, Hector Danravan

"Hell hath no fury like a  
woman scorned."  
to me in the sycamore walk when  
halfry clock strikes seven tonight.  
We and all our will rise it.

It is quite scorching enough to light my cigar with," he said, laughing grimly at his own pun. He twisted it up and held it over the gas jet, lit his cigar with it, and tossed it, burning just as you found it, into the spittoon."

"Had you no curiosity to learn the contents of the letter?" queried Harper, fixing his keen, bright eyes on the valet's immovable face.

"It would have done me little good, sir, to be curious, for I can neither read nor write," he answered stolidly.

"Ah," muttered Harper, thoughtfully, "another woman in the case, eh?" With the quick intuition of those of his calling, he was able to guess pretty accurately at the general import of the letter, as he read the fragment slowly through.

This was certainly a new and very important clew, and the detective set himself to work with a will to get at the bottom of this new mystery.

He readily surmised that the earl had been in "the other days," as she had phrased it, a lover of this woman. And the fact that she had sought an appointment with him on the night of the tragedy, within the grounds of Trevalyn Park, was conclusive evidence that the place and its bearings *were familiar to her*. Was the writer of that letter one of the servants of the Hall?

This idea seemed to fasten itself on the mind of the detective. There was but one way of determining this satisfactorily, and that was to gain an *entrée* into the old squire's household in disguise, and see for himself if any one of the female inmates' handwriting corresponded with this on the fragment of the letter.

Fate aided him. It so happened that at this all-important time, the gardener, who had been an *attaché* of the Hall for many years, was detailed to take charge of the squire, and a new gardener was advertised for, to take his place temporarily.

Among the many applicants who applied for the position, Miss Trevalyn selected a heavy-set, dark-bearded man, awkward enough in his manners, but seeming to possess a fund of knowledge on the subject of flowers and fruit, and how to care for them.

"My father used to superintend this branch of the establishment," said Miss Helen, tears filling her dark, beautiful eyes; "he took great pride in the flowers.

"I shall take great pains with them, Miss," returned the man, respectfully touching his cap.

The tragedy at Trevalyn Hall had been a nine days' wonder; now public excitement was on the wane, though the people marvelled much that the detective, Mr. Harper, had given up the case so easily and gone back to London, while some others averred he had *not* given up the hope of the magnificent reward offered, by any means, but had gone in search of young Mr. Douglas, and that that young man's fate was as good as sealed.

The Dunraven horror might not have died out of the public mind so quickly, had it not been for a newer and fresher tragedy that startled Branlea into still greater excitement. This time it was the giving way of a dam, inundating the entire lower portion of the village that nestled in the green valley.

Owing to the numerous freshets, an unusual thing for that season of the year, the little babbling rivulet that had turned the lazy mill wheel was swollen into a mighty cataract that came rushing down the steep hillside like a fierce, roaring sea one night, carrying death and destruction in its path—sweeping the little cots that nestled on the daisy bordered hills before it like the merest egg shells on the bosom of an angry ocean. When the sun arose the next morning, its pitying light fell upon half a hundred families, houseless, homeless, and suffering from all

the horrors that dread provety is heir to, when overtaken by such calamities.

In this trying ordeal Helen Trevalyn was like an angel of mercy to the oppressed. "I am going to do that which papa would bid me quickly do, if he could be made to understand what was going on around him," she said. The girl put aside her own sorrow heroically and ministered to the afflicted. Every available room at the Hall was put into use to give temporary shelter to the homeless.

In the midst of this, Thomas Blake, the new gardener, proved himself a stanch friend of the poor sufferers. He had been quietly circulating a subscription paper for the aid of the destitute mill hands, and his powers of persuasion were so eloquent that there were very few people in all the village of Branlea who did not put down their names for every cent they could possibly afford to give, even to every servant at Trevalyn Hall. The money was quickly raised, and the amount turned over to the proper relief authorities, but Thomas Blake still retained the subscription paper. Miss Trevalyn's name headed the list.

Often in the seclusion of his own room, the detective examined over and over again each different signature there, and slowly shook his head. "No woman in this house, and no woman in Branlea, wrote that letter to the Earl of Dunraven," he concluded.

Now that his mission in regard to the servants at Trevalyn Hall was ended, he should have left the place, yet he lingered still. The week under that roof had proven worse than a death-warrant to the handsome young detective, for he had learned to love Miss Trevalyn with a love that actually frightened him, it was so intense.

The pleasure of being near her, listening to her sweet, serious voice, was so great for him that at times it was actual pain, and he wondered where it would end for him.

It was heaven to him to walk by her side and look at her face as she examined the flowers, and thanked him in her gentle, considerate way for the pains he was taking with her father's favorite roses. More than once he saw the traces of tears in her dark eyes, and he would have given his life to have brushed them away and whispered words of comfort to her. His keenest trials were during dinner hour in the servants' hall. Whenever they spoke of the squire's daughter it was always with the deepest pity.

"She is wearing her young life out grieving over Mr. Arthur," said Rachel, her maid. "She loves him *still*, despite all the proof that miserable detective who was here brought forth of his guilt on the night of the tragedy. But he has never written one line to her to assure her of his innocence, or let her know of his whereabouts, and it is breaking the girl's heart. But it will all come out right some day, I feel sure," Rachel added, "and he and Miss Helen will marry each other and find happiness at last."

Every one around the table chimed in heartily that they hoped it would be so. *Every one* did I say,—ah well, I must make a correction there. There was one to whom the very thought of Helen Trevalyn marrying Arthur Douglas was more cruel than a death-blow. One who sat pale and silent as he listened; it was the detective.



## CHAPTER VII.

“LOVE TOOK UP THE GLASS OF TIME.”

UP to the present time in his life Hubert Harper, the young detective, had had but one ambition in life, and that was to reach the highest round on the ladder of fame that could be reached in the profession he had chosen.

He had never given a second thought to any woman. He had laughed grimly at the fever men call love, and had wondered that it could sway the lives of the most sensible of men even as the wind sways the leaflet. The class of women, too, with whom his profession threw him in contact, did not elevate his opinion of the sex, and at five and thirty he had gone through the battle of life without even a scratch from the lance of love, and now, suddenly, a new element had come into his existence, and because of it he could not tear himself away from Trevalyn Hall.

The secret of Hubert Harper's life was, that he loved Helen Trevalyn with the force of his whole heart and soul,—loved her silently, desperately, hopelessly. He never dreamed of any return. He was content to lavish his adoration on her, to pour out the love of his soul at her feet. He had never dared to raise his eyes with love to her face. He worshipped her as pagans do the far-off bright stars. He was not one of those who delude themselves. He never said to himself that he had talents, and that he would work until, by his success, he should

win her; but his love was so great that he was content to give all and look for nothing in return. It was the very madness of love. If Miss Trevalyn had bidden him give her his life, he would have laid it down with a smile on his face. He gave her all—he asked nothing; he was content to live in her presence as flowers live in the sun. He asked for nothing but permission to serve her—to live and die for her. He was content if from time to time she gave him a smile, a kind word, or even a kind look—if she allowed him to do something for her that required both time and skill.

It was not a presumptuous love, for he had never dared to touch even the hem of her dress. Once, in giving her a rose his hand touched hers, and it seemed to him that even that slight touch almost drove him mad. Her beautiful face bent over the same flower beds with his own, her hair brushed his cheek; he trembled then like a man seized with ague. She raised her dark, proud eyes to him at once.

“Are you ill?” she asked.

He answered “Yes,” and with unsteady steps he left the garden, entering the house.

“How mad—how worse than mad I am?” he cried. “Dear Heaven, how is it to end, this love of mine?”

He saw no end to it but death. Well, many a man had died for less; many a man had loved his life through, and met with reward. His fate was so different.

“Only let me live, and, living, love her!” he would say to himself.

The days glided into a fortnight, and still Hubert Harper remained at Trevalyn Villa, disguised and in the humble position of under gardener. His chief in London was becoming impatient with him, he well knew, for twice he had received a cipher telegram from him, demanding to know what kept him so long at Branlea.

"What if I should answer 'A pretty young girl,'" smiled Harper, grimly, as he muttered the words to himself.

Miss Helen's favorite resort was the lilac walk, and here he would see her sit for hours, with her white hands lying loose in her lap, gazing dreamily off in the distance.

"Her thoughts are with *him*," Harper would say to himself fiercely, and a sharp pang of jealousy, deep and bitter, would shoot through his heart. And then, there would spring into his mind a desperate resolve to separate Miss Trevalyn and the man she still loved, if it were in human power. There was but one way in which it could be done effectually, and the very thought of that one way made Harper catch his breath hard.

He had evidence enough to involve young Douglas in the Dunraven murder, and whether innocent or guilty, *such evidence as he could bring forward MUST convict him*, and then he could never be anything to Helen Trevalyn in this world or the next.

When this thought first came to Harper, he put it from him with a horrible shudder, asking himself if he had gone suddenly mad to harbor such fancies, but the more he allowed himself to think of the subject, the more fascination the idea, cruel as it was, had for him. He could have seen the man whom Helen Trevalyn loved, suffer on the gallows—*even though he were as innocent as a babe, of the horrible crime brought against him*—than have seen him free to woo and win her for his bride. His love for the squire's daughter was a species of worship that bordered on idolatry. It had been with him as with the poet who said :

"Some day upon the highway going,  
Or on the hilltop or the plain,  
We see a face without our knowing,  
And life is never the same again.

“ We hear a voice that thrills our being  
With nameless yearnings, speechless pain ;  
Our souls are quickened into seeing,  
And life is never the same again.

“ The past has vanished as in vision,  
With all its shadows, clouds and rain ;  
We enter upon paths elysian,  
And life is never the same again.”

His life, up to the time he had met Miss Trevalyn, had been so busy that he had never felt the want of some one to love and some one to love him ; nor felt one thrill of yearning when he looked on and saw how happy other men were in the sweet, hallowed influence of home-life, with a wife to love, and perhaps children to love him.

He had thought men extremely unfortunate in being “ tied down,” as he had always phrased it. *Now* he understood that when a man really finds himself in love, marriage is the Alpha and Omega of his thoughts, the one aim, the ambition, the hope of his life. He could understand now what was meant by the pathetic lines :

“ ‘ Strangers but a week before  
Giving pleasant word for word,  
Smile for smile, and nothing more !  
Can you tell what look or tone  
First this tide of feeling stirred ?  
What strange tremor broke the calm  
Of our friendly greeting . . . gave  
Such tremulous, wild delight  
In the meeting of the eyes  
And the touch of palm to palm ?  
All the gladness of good-day,  
All the passion of good-night !  
Was it, then, a swift surprise  
To your soul as to my own ?

Did you watch the words, unsaid,  
On my lips, . . . and dream awake  
All the long night for my sake—  
Lost in fancy's eager bliss  
At the phantom of a kiss?  
Was it not enough for years—  
Wealth enough to last to death?  
What strong love beyond control—  
What so blent us, soul with soul,  
Pulse with pulse, and breath with breath."

As his love for Miss Trevalyn grew, his bitter jealousy of Arthur Douglas increased; and nothing could have been more fatal than that, for he held the young man's very life in his hands, as it were.

At this important epoch in the state of affairs, young Mrs. Trevalyn returned to the Hall. It so happened that up to this time, the detective had not met the squire's wife.

On the night on which the wedding was to have taken place, it was given out that young Mrs. Trevalyn was too ill to join the guests and witness the ceremony, and she was not able to leave her room to be present at the coroner's inquest. Immediately after the removal of the body of the unfortunate young earl, Mrs. Trevalyn had left the Hall, "utterly prostrated by the shock," the servants said.

It was without particular interest that Harper learned one morning, that the squire's wife had returned late the previous night.

"I for one am none too pleased," said Sara, one of the maids. "There will be twice as much work to do. She always turns things topsy-turvy, and nothing suits her. She hates roses quite as much as Miss Helen loves them."

"Let me give you a word of advice," she said turning

to Harper, "because you are a new gardener here. Don't attempt to argue with her. If she says black is white, or white is black, let her have it her way, and if she says water runs up hill, you must not know that it don't. Why, the old squire don't dare to say that his soul is his own, when she is about. But then, if old men will marry young women, they must not complain if they find they have wedded a Tartar. These gay young women are not the kind that will cater to the whims of a cranky old man, as the squire ought to have known."

Harper strolled out on to the lawn, his thoughts too busy with quite another subject to pay heed to more of the servants' gossip.

Suddenly he was aroused from the reverie into which he had fallen, by the sound of light footsteps and the frou-frou of a woman's skirts on the thick grass. Turning quickly, with beating heart, for he thought it must be Miss Helen, he saw, standing beside him, a slender, beautiful woman in mauve mull and lace.

"Who ordered you to make a flower bed here in the center of the lawn?" she asked, imperiously.—"No doubt this is Miss Trevalyn's work. She has taken advantage of my temporary absence to have this done, but I shall —"

The rest of the sentence was never uttered,—the lace handkerchief and the book she carried dropped from her nerveless hand.

"What do you mean by staring at me in that fashion?" she demanded, in a voice that was a strange mixture of fear and anger.

For answer, Harper uttered simply the name *Fifine*. A gasp fell from her lips, she started back in terror, the light died from her eyes and the color from her lips.

"Fifine," repeated Harper hoarsely, "what in the

name of heaven are you doing here? It cannot be possible that you are Squire Trevalyn's wife, that he has married *you*!"

She raised her ghastly face with desperate courage and looked into the keen eyes regarding her so intently.

"You have evidently made a mistake," she said, calmly. "I am Mrs. Trevalyn, but not 'the person you have named.'"

"You are indeed Fifine," said Harper impatiently. "Step this way to the rose arbor and I will show you how useless it is to deny your identity to me."

"I—see it is useless to deny it now," she said, faintly, "for I recognize you in spite of your disguise. Those keen, piercing eyes can belong to but one man—to Mr. Harper, the Scotland-Yard detective, and I ask, what are *you* doing here?"

"Your naturally shrewd judgment should tell you that, Fifine," he answered.

"I am *Mrs. Trevalyn, now*. Please be so good as to remember that, in addressing me in future," she said, haughtily.

"Do not attempt to do the fine lady with me, Fifine," returned Harper. "It is ridiculous and a waste of time. But to be honest with you, I am not looking for *you* this time, unless," and he looked at her keenly, "I find that you are mixed up with the murder of the Earl of Dunraven in some way."

She fell down upon the nearest garden seat, shivering with terror.

"And now, since I find that *you* are here, I have an idea that you do know a little something about it. You are not the woman to stand calmly by and see the man you love wed another; you would *kill* him first, Fifine."

Quick as a flash the idea occurred to him that the fragment of burned letter in his pocket-book was prob-

ably in Fifine's hand-writing, and he decided upon a bold move.

"It would have been like you to have written him, urging an appointment, and, if he was fool enough to comply, he would have rued it."

"Prove that I wrote him if you can," she cried vehemently. "I say I did *not* do it. Why should you come here, suspecting *me*? Why must I be always persecuted and hunted down?"

"We gauge the present by the past. History repeats itself. So do the acts of fair women, it is safe to presume," he answered. "Whenever you found yourself cornered in the past, Fifine, you were wise enough to make a clean breast of the whole affair. I should advise you to do so in this case. All the denials in the world will not sustain your assertion that you did *not* make an appointment with the earl on that fatal night when *this* proof exists," and as he spoke he drew from his pocket-book the bit of charred paper and held it up at arms' length before her eyes. "Will you—can you deny that this is your writing?"

He never saw such terror on any woman's face before. She arose hurriedly, her face white as death. "Come to the arbor," she said. "I cannot talk to you here; a dozen pairs of eyes might be watching us from the house."

Silently he followed her to the rose-arbor indicated. He leaned against one of the pillars and watched her with folded arms, as she flung herself down on one of the chairs, covering her face with her hands, sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Of what use to deny that I wrote that letter?" she said at length. "You would find out that I did sooner or later."

"Did Dunraven come to the place indicated?" asked Harper. "Remember, the truth will serve you best."



"Yes," she whispered in an awe-stricken voice, "he came."

"What happened then?" asked the detective. "Did you quarrel?"

"I—I—was late at the trysting place," she sobbed. "When I reached the spot where the tall sycamore grew my foot slipped in some slimy substance, and I fell, and in falling my hands struck the body of a man cold in death. God help me! I did not know until almost an hour afterward that it was the body of the Earl of Dunraven. Hushing my terrified screams I hurried with headlong haste back to the house, and then I found to my horror that my hands and my dress were covered with blood."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A PATH STREWN WITH THORNS.

"I HAVE told you the plain truth," declared Mrs. Trevalyn, facing the detective calmly. "Now take what steps you like. I can see for myself that matters look dark against me, but for all that I solemnly declare to you that I am innocent."

But even as she spoke her eyes drooped uneasily beneath the fixed, searching gaze bent upon her.

"What name do you call yourself by here?" she asked suddenly, and he answered, "Thomas Blake."

"I shall have to put the name down; I should never remember it," she said, drawing a memorandum, to which was attached a pearl and gold pencil, from her pocket, and, to the detective's great astonishment, he saw her jot down the name—*holding the pencil in her left hand.*

Used as he was to surprises, this certainly overreached them all. Up to this point he had believed the squire's wife imprudent, but innocent of the crime which involved her in its web. But here a new and startling *denouement* stared him in the face. For it had been clearly demonstrated at the inquest that the blow had been struck by a person *holding the weapon in the left hand.*

To say that Harper was dumfounded and bewildered at this turn of affairs is putting it rather mild. Here was a startling clew brought to light which was wholly unlooked for. All night long Harper paced the floor of his room

trying to sift the hardest problem that had ever come to him to solve.

"One of these three people murdered the Earl of Dunraven in Trevalyn Park on his bridal eve. Now the question was, *which of the three* was guilty," he mused.

In the first place, no man in the wide world could have had more cause to hate the earl with a deadly hatred than Arthur Douglas. Was there not the bitterest of blood between these two rivals for Miss Trevalyn's hand, and furthermore, had they not agreed that if ever they met again *they would shoot at each other on sight*? Was not Douglas at the south gate where the earl must pass on this fatal bridal eve, and at the identical hour in which the tragedy had occurred? and last and by no means least, the knife with which the deed had been committed bore the initials A. D., and the young man's disappearance only made the case the blacker against him. So much for Arthur Douglas' case, and now in regard to Squire Trevalyn.

The squire's cause for hating the earl was quite as strong as that of young Douglas. Had he not heard from his ambush behind the curtains on that never-to-be-forgotten night, the squire's confession to his daughter Helen, of how he dreaded the man who had the power of sending him to a felon's cell—through the forged papers, *which he always carried in his breast pocket*, to hold as a sword over the squire's head if emergency demanded it. And the price he asked for giving them up, was his beautiful daughter's hand in marriage—of their bitter quarrels in consequence—and of how the squire went down the sycamore walk on that fatal night to make one last appeal to the earl to spare his child, and of the terrible altercation between them that finally ended in blows. The squire had discovered his presence in the room just as the words which the detective was listening breath-

lessly to hear trembled on his lips, and of course they were not uttered.

And now, another clew, and one certainly as puzzling as either of the other two, branched out in quite a different direction. No wonder Harper was mystified. Here was a woman who had loved Dunraven with all the passionate love of an unbridled nature—who had loved him so well that his desertion of her had almost broken her heart, and at length the reaction—hatred—set in, and that intensity of feeling that caused her to write him that she would rather see him lying dead at her feet than wedded to another woman. Truer words were never uttered than these,

“ Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.”

She warned him in her note that he should never lead Miss Trevalyn to the altar, and warned him solemnly that if he did not meet her in the sycamore walk at the time she designated, he would rue it. It seems that he went to the trysting place at the hour appointed, and she confessed to having seen him there.

Now the question was : Which of these three dealt the Earl of Dunraven the fatal blow *with the left hand*?

If it was this woman, how did she come in possession of the knife bearing the initials of Arthur Douglas, and, first and foremost, which of these three met the unfortunate earl *first*? The three could not have been at this particular spot in the sycamore walk *at the identical moment*, or two of them could not have helped being witnesses to the tragedy. No, this last theory was impracticable. He was convinced that Dunraven and the assassin were alone together at the time the fatal blow was dealt.

Harper was a sagacious man, but in the face of the difficulties which beset his path at every step, he found himself no nearer the solution of this puzzling case at the

end of a fortnight, than when he took hold of the affair in the beginning.

"But it is an ill wind which blows nobody good," quoted Harper, leaning his head on his elbows, that rested on the window-sill, and looking thoughtfully out into the moonlight distance. Had it not been for this affair, fair Helen Trevalyn would never have been *in my power*. He repeated the last three words over musingly to himself.

Yes, she was certainly in this man's power, for, one word from him would bring the father she loved so well to the gallows. "When should he break this state of affairs to her?" he mused.

Fate brought about a way sooner than he anticipated. Miss Trevalyn went over to the village the next day, and, as her own pony was lame, there was no other course left than to ride her father's horse, Sultan. When he heard that Miss Trevalyn had ordered *this* horse saddled, Harper was filled with alarm, and begged her to permit him to accompany her.

"You are very kind," replied Helen, "but I assure you Sultan is perfectly safe. I have ridden him before," and she turned away from him with a quiet dignity that admitted of no further argument.

Harper watched her quite out of sight. "God! how I am growing to love that girl day by day," he said, turning away, "but the dream I am indulging in is madness, for I am nothing to her—nothing!"

Would she be so *very* angry with him if she knew he had dared to love her, he wondered vaguely, and he thought of the lines he had read somewhere:—

"You who in Cupid's rolls inscribe your name,  
First seek an object worthy of your flame;  
Then strive with art your lady's mind to gain;  
And last provide, your love may long remain."

"All women are content that men should woo—  
She who complains, and she who will not do ;  
Rest then secure, whate'er thy luck may prove,  
Not to be hated for declaring love."

"Like Dian's kiss, unasked, unsought,  
Love gives itself, it is not bought.  
Nor voice, nor sound betrays  
Its deep, impassioned gaze ;  
It comes, the beautiful, the free,  
The crown of all humanity,  
In silence, and alone,  
To seek the elected one,  
No one is so accursed by fate,  
No one so utterly desolate,  
But some heart, though unknown,  
Responds unto his own :  
Responds as if, with unseen wings,  
An angel touched its quivering strings,  
And whisper in its song,  
'Where hast thou stayed so long?'"

The sun sank low in the west, but, to Harper's consternation Miss Trevalyn did not return. To make the matter all the worse, he could see that a heavy storm was brewing, and that it would overtake the girl unless she had set out for home an hour before. Harper's anxiety increased to such an extent, when he heard the distant peals of thunder reverberating through the darkening sky, that he could not resist the impulse to walk down the road a short distance and see if he could see her coming.

Suddenly he recollected that the little bridge, some two miles distant, was undergoing repairs; the men had commenced work on it late that afternoon. It would be a wise precaution to meet Miss Trevalyn on the other side of it and advise her to go by the other road. As he

reached the bridge, he heard in the distance the sound of horses' hoofs, and a sound accompanying it that made his very heart almost stop beating. It was a piercing cry, in Miss Trevalyn's voice. The next instant he beheld the horse Sultan, emerging around the curve of the serpentine road, with Helen swaying to and fro in the saddle like a slender leaf in the gale. The bridle had snapped asunder, and Miss Trevalyn had lost all control of the spirited animal, who was plunging and dashing madly up the road at a headlong pace.

Harper could see that it was only a question of a few brief instants ere the terrified girl would be dashed from the saddle, meeting certain death by striking one of the trees that lined either side of the road.

Harper's face paled as he saw her danger. In an instant he had made up his mind what course to pursue. He would save her life or he would die in the attempt.

On, with the speed of the wind, came the coal-black horse, and again a piteous cry floated on to Harper's ears, and that cry nerved him for the terrible ordeal that followed.

He saw that the maddened animal must pass within a yard from the point where he stood, fairly rooted to the spot, and, if it should swerve a single hair's breadth in his direction, the plunging iron hoofs would crush him.

With a white, determined face, he wound his left arm firmly around the trunk of a tree, and stood calmly waiting to grasp the bridle of the infuriated steed with his strong right arm as it plunged past him.

The few seconds that passed as he awaited the terrible instant seemed the length of eternity. He realized but too well that upon his agility and strength hung this lovely young creature's life.

Nearer, nearer, dashed Sultan, with his terrified burden—one brief instant later he was abreast of the detec-

tive. And in that thrilling moment a strong hand grasped one of the rings attached to the bit.

There was a powerful lunge forward that nearly tore Harper's strong right arm from its socket.

If his left arm had not been wound so firmly around the trunk of the tree, we should have had to record a tragedy; as it was, the powerful hand that held the ring of the bit brought Sultan back upon his haunches; he had recognized a master hand, and the next instant he stood panting and quivering, but docile enough, by the roadside.

But in that backward plunge Helen had lost her balance, and would have fallen headlong from the saddle had not Harper loosened his grip from the horse, and held out his arms just in time to catch her, and the slim, girlish figure that rested for one brief instant a dead weight against his heart, made the blood course like fire through every fiber and vein of his whole being.

Involuntarily his arms tightened closely about her. The soft hair brushed his cheek. But as she struggled out of his arms she dropped down among the blue bells at his feet.

"I am not hurt," she said, smiling with difficulty as he leaned over her, his face white with fear. "Don't look so frightened!"

"Thank God!" he answered, hardly above his breath and very devoutly, for the words came from the very depths of his heart. "When I saw the horse throw you I thought—I—thought oh! (with a shudder) "I don't know what I thought. But are you quite sure you are not hurt?"

"Quite," she answered.

"Are you sure?" he persisted.

To prove how perfectly intact she was, Miss Trevalyn attempted to rise, but as she did so, her face grew



slightly distorted with a look of pain, and she sank back on her bed of blue bells.

"I am not quite sure either ; I seem to have done something to my foot—sprained the—the—ankle or—or—turned it."

"Does it pain you ? " Harper asked.

"Yes, a little," she admitted.

"I wish I could suffer all the pain of it for you, Miss Trevalyn!" he ejaculated fervently, and regretted the words the moment they were spoken, for she looked at him with startled eyes.

## CHAPTER IX.

"ARE YOU CONTENT TO MARRY ME, KNOWING THAT I  
ABHOR YOU?"

HARPER bit his lip and looked at her; the words were spoken, so what is the use of wishing them unsaid?

"The question is, how am I to get home, do you think?" asked Helen. "The horse has no doubt reached the villa by this time, and I—I am afraid I cannot walk."

Harper bent over her wistfully, flushing a little. "You cannot walk,"—this very positively, adding earnestly—"will you let me carry you to the villa?—I am very strong."

Helen reviewed the matter in her own mind and saw that there was no other course, and so consented. He lifted her very gently. Gold could not be more precious to him than the burden he held in his arms. Helen could not help but notice how they trembled.

"I am tiring you," she said anxiously. "I am sorry—oh, so sorry."

He did not dare risk her displeasure by telling her that those were the happiest moments of his life, and despite his regret for her pain, he could not help thanking fate for the sweet boon the accident gave him of holding her so close to his throbbing heart.

They made the distance at last, but not without several rests by the wayside. The storm had come down upon them in earnest now, and both were drenched by

the down-pouring rain, despite the fact that Harper had taken off his coat and insisted upon wrapping it about Helen.

"How can I ever thank you for the service you have rendered me to-day?" said Helen, as he set her down at last, in the corridor of the villa. "You have saved my life, I feel sure; but for your presence there, I should have been hurled headlong against the tree and killed. I shall be most grateful to you—always. If money will reward you, Mr. Blake, you shall be amply repaid for your kindness."

He drew back and looked at her. "Do not offer me money for a service of this kind, Miss Trevalyn," he said huskily, "you hurt my feelings."

"I am sorry then that I offered it," responded Helen gently. "I only wished to show you how much I appreciated and valued your services."

"Miss Trevalyn, Helen!" he whispered, clasping her hand suddenly in his. "Shall I tell you the reward, and the only reward I would take? Oh, do not turn from me, listen to me! I am not what I seem—an humble gardener—I am Mr. Harper, the detective, and I have learned to love you, Miss Helen, with a love that is so intense it is eating my very life away day by day. I must speak, though this is neither the time, place, nor is it under the right condition,—but you are so gentle you will listen to me. I am not a poet but, oh, this I say unto you:

"Perchance if we had never met,  
I had been spared this vain regret—  
This endless striving to forget;  
And yet, I could not bear the pain  
Of never seeing thee again!  
I think of all thou art to me;  
I dream of what thou canst not be;  
My life is curst with thoughts of thee;

But still I own —I love but thee,  
Blessing or curse whiche'er thou be;  
Oh, be as thou hast been to me  
Forever and forever."

The knowledge that this man standing before her was not what he seemed,—a quiet, humble gardener,—but was in reality the detective whose sudden disappearance caused her so much anxiety and fear for many a long day on her father's account, filled her with terror too great for words and struck her literally dumb.

"Let me tell you all that you are to me, before you ring for your servants to come to your assistance," he murmured hoarsely.

Looking into the face of the man before her, Helen Trevalyn saw she was in the presence of a great passion—a great earnestness, a tragedy, that could have but one ending. Before she could rise, he was kneeling by her side. A heart of stone might have pitied him.

He was kneeling by her side—his whole soul in his eyes and on his lips.

"Thank Heaven," he said, "the time has come at last. My beautiful love, my queen among women, how have I waited so long for this opportunity!"

Miss Trevalyn made one effort—she tried to withdraw her hand from his clasp; she tried to rise and stem with one word the torrent that came from his lips; she might as well have tried to stop the flowing of a summer tide with a gesture of her hand. She was in the presence of a master, and for the time she had to submit. "Mr. Harper," she contrived to say, "I do not understand. I—"

"There needs no understanding," he cried. "None. I have to tell you in words what I have told you already a hundred times in a hundred different ways; I love you with all my heart! I know no other word, there are none

which can tell how dearly or how much all my heart, my soul, my life goes in those few words, 'I love you.'"

The very vehemence of his passion startled her, a very flame of love seemed to glow in his face; his eyes were full of fire. He was looking with wistful, longing eyes into her face.

"I have read," he cried, "of the desire of the moth for the stars; the pure, bright stars, shining in the far-off heaven, far from the moth as you, in your fair loveliness, in your queenly grace, are from me; but I love you so! Oh, listen to me! Love could bridge over even such a distance as lies between heaven and earth. Some men have many loves, I have but this one; some men worship many fair faces, I only love yours; some men fritter away the strong love of a life; I give all mine to you."

She tried again to take the white, jewelled hand from his; she might as well have tried to stop the lava that flows from Mount Vesuvius.

"Most men who have lived as long as I have done have loved some one; they have memories of a fair-haired little sweetheart, or of some sweet face, kissed under the mistletoe. I have no such memories; my heart holds you, and only you. It is for that I ask some return, because I bring you the whole, unbroken, strong, passionate love of my heart.

"See," he continued; "I have known many women, many have smiled upon me, but your face is the only one that has ever haunted me. It is because of this—because my heart has been cold and hard to all others, that it is so devoted to you; men bring many offerings to the feet of the woman they love. I offer you everything I have in the world. Ah, Heaven! what more can I give you? I wish I could change my heart, which beats only for you, into a rose, and let it die in your hand. I give you all that a man can give to the woman he loves—

my soul and my life. I would live only for you. If you will love me, if you will marry me, there will be no limit to my ambition. I feel great powers within me; I feel that if my heart rests in your love that I could do great things. In that soft, sweet hand of yours I lay my heart and my life; my ambition to be ruled by you; my soul to be guided by you. You are so good, so *spirituelle*, your thoughts are so noble, your soul simple yet so beautiful, that if you would lay your hand in mine, you would be my guardian angel taking me to heaven!"

When he paused for a moment, overcome by the vehemence of his own words, she had no answer. Something of the responsibility attending a great passion had struck her, and had struck her dumb.

"Mr. Harper," said Helen, as soon as she could find her voice, "I pray that you will say no more—you have astonished and perplexed me. While I am deeply conscious of the honor you have paid me,—the most sincere that man can pay to woman,—I say to you that it can never be,—it is impossible."

"Why impossible?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Because I could never care for you," she answered gently. "No woman should marry a man whose affection and society are not absolutely essential to her peace of mind and heart. Mine is in no degree dependent on you."

He looked at her with a sudden dangerous gleam in his eyes, that was not pleasant to contemplate, and a hard grim laugh broke from his lips. "Ah, if you only realized, Miss Trevalyn, *how very dependent you are on me for your peace of mind*," he retorted, coming a step nearer her, "you would not dismiss me after that cold, haughty fashion, I fancy."

She looked up at him with wonder in her eyes. "I do not understand you," she faltered indignantly.

"I hold the fate of Squire Trevalyn, as well as the

man whom you love in my hands," he answered. "Have you forgotten the squire's confession, which I overheard? Ah, Miss Trevalyn, you can make an angel or a devil of me. I swear to you by everything you hold dear, that you shall never call Arthur Douglas husband.

"Now listen to me. My business here was to hunt down the party who murdered the Earl of Dunraven, and bring the assassin to the gallows. I have done the former, and it remains for me to do the latter, and claim the large reward offered. But, since I have been under this roof, a wild hope sprang into my heart that I might gain a still greater reward than money, if—if—I—were to let the guilty party go free. 'Love is the power behind the throne,' it is said, Miss Trevalyn. We have all heard the stories of the fair faces of women that have infatuated kings, and for whose sake even mighty empires were overthrown. I used to marvel at that in the past. I wonder at it no longer,—I can understand now the full meaning of the old saying, that, 'when a man loves, he would sell his very soul, if it were the price, to purchase the affection of the woman his heart craves.' Do you understand, Miss Trevalyn,—his reputation, his honor, aye, his very soul he would give up for the woman he loves. And such a love I have for you."

Helen's face had grown as white as death. It almost seemed to her as if the breath was leaving her body. "If—I—refuse you," she said, in a voice quivering with fear, "what would you do?"

"I have said you could make of me an angel or a devil," he reiterated, "If you refuse me, I do not care what becomes of me, or what I do. I shall make the most of my knowledge, and—the consequence will be either Squire Trevalyn or Arthur Douglas will swing for the murder of Dunraven. Marry me, Miss Trevalyn, and I will shield your father, and save the man you love.

It all rests with you. I am the only man living who holds the evidence that would convict either of them. For your sake, I would seal my lips in eternal silence. I leave their fate—as I leave my life and my happiness with you. Think again, if you would not rue it, if you persist in refusing me.”

“You torture me—I cannot bear it,” she sobbed, wringing her hands. “Oh, why—*why* would you persist in marrying one who would abhor you!” He sprang eagerly forward, but Helen held up her hand, drawing back from him with such a gesture of scorn that he could not mistake it. Then, for half a minute, she was silent; not from want of words, but because she had so much to say that she hardly knew where to begin. He took advantage of her silence.

“Miss Trevalyn,” he began, “may I hope that you have a favorable answer for me?”

She drew her graceful figure to its full height, and looked at him proudly, steadily.

“I have heard all my father’s story,” she said, “and it is needless to add that I believe him guiltless; and now, let me ask, is there no way of saving him without sacrificing me?”

“No,” he replied; “for in so doing I would lose my only chance of winning you. For your father’s sake you will not send me away. That, if not my great love for you, should plead for me. Will you give me one word of encouragement, Miss Trevalyn?”

“I cannot,” she said, turning away.

“Then you decidedly refuse me?” he said, with lowering brow.

Suddenly there came to her the memory of the squire’s agony as she knelt in terror before him listening to his story. How he stretched out his hands to her to save him. Could she send this only chance of help far



from him, and look the terrible consequence in the face?

"Stay, Mr. Harper," she said, hurriedly, bowing her dark, curly head on her hands. She was silent so long again that he drew near to her, saying:

"If you send me from you, it will be a death blow to your father."

He never forgot the stormy beauty of the girlish face raised to his. For years afterward that picture was before him. The lovely, slender figure in the pearl gray robe, that fell about her in graceful folds, the spray of scarlet blossoms at the white throat and twined in the meshes of the nut-brown curls, and the background of plush amber portières.

"Do you think it manly to force me into a marriage because I love my father so dearly—because it is the only way in which I can save him?" she asked with sudden passion.

"It is my only chance of winning you, as I have said, Miss Trevalyn," he replied, "and I seize the opportunity."

As he spoke he had attempted to take the little hand that was lying on the back of the chair, to which she had been clinging for support, for she would not take the seat he placed for her.

She withdrew her hand as though he had suddenly touched it with fire; and then, with a strangely frank smile, she looked at him.

"How can you ask me to marry you when I shrink from the very touch of your hand?" she asked with a shudder.

"You will learn to love me. I feel sure of it."

"Are you content to marry me," she asked, "knowing that I despise you, that I look upon you with the utmost contempt?"

And he saw the tight clenching of the little white hand and the hot flushing of the fair young face.

"I will not argue the matter with you, Miss Trevalyn," he said, frowning darkly. "Know this and let it suffice: I would win you if I could, at whatever cost, on any terms."

For some moments she was silent, evidently struggling with her anger, and then she said slowly :

"I repeat that you are doing an unmanly thing in forcing me to marry you. You leave me no alternative. I will make those terms as difficult for you as I can," she cried with flashing eyes. "I will be your wife, because I am driven to it, though I hate you. You must know the truth. You will have secured me, but you shall not even touch my hands. No word of love shall ever cross my lips to you. We shall be together, yet further apart than strangers. Are you satisfied to claim me as the price of saving my father on those terms?"

He looked at her. She was so royally beautiful in her scorn, so fair in her bitter anger and defiance—so much more winning—even so than any other woman in her complaisant mood—that he could have given his life even for that victory.

She looked at him as though she were driven at bay ; then took out her little jewelled watch and looked at it, as though to intimate that their interview was at an end.

He rose at once.

"I do not know that I need remain longer," he said. "I will come again when your anger has cooled to discuss the matter of our marriage."

He would not notice the shudder that passed over her, and how her whole figure seemed to shrink and cower as a flower before a burning blast of wind.

"*Au revoir*, my dear," he said, "not good-by."

And he laughed, and the slight inflection of maliciousness in that laugh sent a hot, indignant flush to her face.

She bowed and turned abruptly away, and a moment

after, limping painfully, she groped her way to her own room like one stricken blind, tears falling down her cheeks like rain.

"Is it a dream—a horrible dream," she murmured, "or is this miserable creature really me? The very sunshine seems blotted out, and the world all cold and drear. O God! now I am parted from my lover forever. The golden future we planned for ourselves is not to be. Ah, the pity of it—the pity of it!"

She remembered the story of a beautiful young queen whom fate had parted from her love, and was forced, for political reasons, into wedding another, whom she had never seen, but whom she had heard of since she had been a little child with much dread. The feast was gotten ready, and the royal guests assembled, but the bride elect was long in coming. When they went to her room they found the door locked. They forced it open, and there, on her knees, they found the hapless young queen, arrayed in her bridal robes, cold and dead. In her hands they found the portrait of the lover she had loved so well—and lost. And they knew that in bidding him a last farewell her heart had broken.

The story had made a great impression on Helen when she first read it, and for many a day it haunted her memory. Would her heart break on her bridal eve like that of the hapless young queen?

## CHAPTER X.

### FATE'S DECREE.

Beloved ! thou art the being,  
*Who art my destiny ;*  
Star of my life—my fate's henceforth,  
To love, and love but thee.

What pen could adequately portray the grief that filled Miss Trevalyn's heart when she looked the fate that lay before her squarely in the face ? Where was the God she had always prayed to since she had been a little child at her mother's knee, that He did not put forth His power and save her from this terrible sacrifice on the altar of duty ? she wondered. Her life had been as pure and spotless as the leaves of a lily. Did the God she had believed in, take no cognizance of this in selecting her for a martyr ?

"Oh ! if I but had some one to confide in—some one to go to for advice," murmured the girl, wringing her fair hands together in bitter anguish. But no ; there was no one to whom she could go with this fatal secret, and ask for guidance. No one in the wide world.

It is said that trouble rarely travels singly. Helen found the old saying quite correct. Her step-mother made things disagreeable for her now that the squire was practically helpless to see to his daughter's welfare.

In the childlike state in which the squire had settled into, he seemed to depend wholly upon the services of

his young wife, and this was a state of affairs highly displeasing to young Mrs. Trevalyn.

It cut Helen to the heart to see how sharply and impatiently her step-mother answered when the squire spoke to her, in his mild, hesitating way.

"Oh, if you would but be more gentle with him," said Helen, in a quivering voice, turning quickly away to hide her tears, "you might nurse him back to health and strength with a little patience."

Young Mrs. Trevalyn's eyes flashed angrily. "I did not marry an old man to wait on him," she said sneeringly. "Let him call the servants to fetch him what he wants, and, in short, to look after him. I am getting tired of this sort of thing."

Miss Trevalyn flushed, then turned deadly pale. "Pray let *me* administer to poor papa's wants; it would be such a pleasure to me. Do not call the servants," she said earnestly.

"A well old man is bad enough, but a sick old man to be tied to, is simply unendurable," declared the young wife.

"Pardon me," said Helen, white to the lips, "you should have considered the possibilities of such contingencies before you married my father. It is cruel to think and speak of his hapless condition as you do. If you would but forbear speaking of him in that disparaging way in my presence I should be very grateful."

"Do you mean to dictate to me in my own house as to what I shall do or what I shall *not* do, Miss Trevalyn!" screamed her step-mother wrathily. "Have a care, young lady! you are venturing on delicate ground."

Helen rose hastily and quitted the room to restrain the retort which sprang to her lips. She walked out into the grounds, and it seemed to her that the rose-laden winds cooled the burning tears that coursed down her cheeks.

"In—her—own—house!" repeated the girl bitterly, clenching her hands tightly together. "Yes, it is that—she speaks truly, and *I* am the interloper, here—not she, and there is not a moment in the day that she does not remind me of this fact in one way or another. If it were not for poor father I would not remain under this roof an hour longer. Heaven pity me! I am growing utterly reckless as to what becomes of me, now that this marriage with Mr. Harper is definitely settled."

There was the sound of a step behind her, and, turning quickly about, Helen found herself standing face to face with a tall, bearded stranger.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Miss Helen Trevalyn?" he asked, raising his hat with a profound bow.

"Yes," she responded, with a nervous start.

Ever since her father had confided to her the bitter secret that was to make all his after life a curse to him, the girl had not known one moment of peace despite the detective's assurance that he was the only person who would ever dream of connecting Squire Trevalyn's name with that most unfortunate affair. Whenever a stranger approached the house, the dread that it was some one who by some chance knew of the squire's presence in the sycamore walk that night, and had come to proclaim his knowledge and cause her father's arrest, was always present with Helen.

For a moment, the stranger, all forgetful of his errand, stood quite still and looked at the young girl before him. He had heard that Miss Trevalyn was very beautiful, but her fair spirituelle beauty exceeded what his fancy had painted by far.

"You wished to see me, sir?" interrogated Miss Trevalyn, and those words recalled him to his senses.

"I beg to introduce myself by saying that I am Eugene

Montgomery, of the Queen's service. I am the bearer of a letter to you—from—Mr. Arthur Douglas," he said, and as he uttered the words he looked keenly into Miss Trevalyn's face. He saw that she turned very pale and caught her breath with a quick gasp.

Taking a letter from his breast pocket, he handed it to her.

"I will come an hour hence to see if you have an answer for me," he said.

"I beg that you will come into the house, and wait," she suggested: "I—I—can read the letter through in a very few moments."

"I should much prefer the privilege of strolling through the grounds and smoking my cigar," he declared.

"Do so, by all means," assented Helen, adding "You will find me in the rose arbor yonder, whenever you choose to return."

Mr. Montgomery bowed and turned away, although he would have given much to have been able to have stood beside the girl and watched her face as she read the lines Arthur Douglas had penned and committed to his care for safe delivery.

When he had disappeared among the trees, Helen repaired quickly to the arbor, and there, with trembling hands broke the seal of the letter from the one man, of all the world of men, whom she loved. It ran as follows:

"DEAREST HELEN:—

"I earnestly entreat that you will read my letter through and if you cannot find one kind thought in your heart for me, at least do not despise me utterly. I am writing this on, what up to a few days ago, I imagined would be my death bed. I have been to the very brink of eternity, but a strange fate held me back and bade me linger in the hard, bitter world that I was so anxious to leave.

"Before you proceed further with my letter to you, I pray you to read over carefully the one enclosed, which explains my life from the hour you and I parted; up to the present moment,—and then finish this :"

The letter enclosed which he referred to, was the one written to his friend, Eugene Montgomery, on the night which he thought would be his last on earth, and which the reader will remember as a complete resumé of his strange experience on the evening of the murder of the young Earl of Dunraven, and the pitiful sentence that closed it, in which he called upon heaven and the angels to bear witness to the heart-rending fact that he did not know whether he was innocent or guilty of the crime.

Helen Trevalyn trembled like an aspen leaf as she reached the last line, and then turned again to Arthur's letter.

"Now you know all, my darling," it ran, "and my after fate rests with you. If you have faith in my innocence, and believe in me, it will give me courage to face the world, and do battle with it, and wade through seas of blood if need be, to establish the innocence in which you put your dear faith—and to discover beyond the possibility of a doubt, who slew the Earl of Dunraven.

"If you find me innocent, will you give me the hope of claiming the dear hand that was pledged to me before the earl came between us? A man must have something to hope for,—something to work for,—some one to love and be loved by,—to make life worth the living.

"I would have come to you and plead my own cause but that I am still too weak to leave this place: In the desperation of the moment I sought to take my own life, but a power higher than my own will saved me from self-destruction. My friend, Mr. Montgomery, who will deliver this to you, will bring me my answer. He tells me they are searching for me. I would have given myself up to the authorities long since, but for his earnest entreaties.



"You know all, now, my Helen, and I ask,—what course do you advise me to pursue? I will be guided entirely in this matter by you.

"Do you give me the hope of winning you, despite all that has occurred, or do you doom me to eternal misery? The very thought brings so much woe to my heart that I banish it quickly. You hold my fate in your hands, my Helen—will your answer bring life or death for me?

"Yours, through all time and eternity,

"ARTHUR."

Helen's tears were falling thick and fast on the letter by the time she had reached the last line. "What should she say to him,—how should she answer him?" was the question Miss Trevalyn asked herself, in an agonized murmur over and over again as she clutched the letter tightly in her hand, and the terrible thought assailed her once more—which,—ah heaven! which was guilty of the murder of the Earl of Dunraven? Her father—or—her lover?"

How long she sat there, battling with her conflicting emotions, Miss Trevalyn never knew. She was startled at length by a footstep on the gravel walk outside the arbor, and the next instant Mr. Eugene Montgomery stood hat in hand before her. He saw that she was very pale and that her eyes bore traces of tears.

"You are come for my answer," she said steadily, "and—and I have none to give, other than this:—All is over between Mr. Douglas and myself forevermore—the past cannot be bridged over."

"That is a very hard message to take back to him, Miss Trevalyn," said Mr. Montgomery, earnestly. "Could you not be induced to think better of it, and give the poor fellow some hope to cling to?"

"I repeat that that is all the answer I can give Mr

Douglas," said Helen faintly. "He must be content with it."

"Would you not prefer sending a written message by me?" suggested the gentleman.

"No," returned Helen, "a verbal one is quite as well."

He bowed and turned away. He never knew that long before the echo of his footsteps died away, the girl had flung herself face downward in the violet studded grass crying out to heaven that her heart was breaking for sending so hard a message to the man she loved.

"Arthur! Arthur!" she moaned, "though you be guilty—I—I—could love you still."

"Love is not love that alters when it alteration finds."

"It is a great pity that Mr. Arthur Douglas is unworthy of so much love and devotion," said a sneering voice at her side.

Helen sprang to her feet with the utmost consternation and found herself standing face to face with the man whose promised bride she was.

"Have—you—stooped to so despicable an action as to spy upon my actions and play the part of eaves-dropper?" she asked in a voice ringing with scorn, and before he could find an answer, she asked coldly—"What brought you here?"

"I answer truthfully in saying that I had no thought of spying upon your actions," he returned flushing, adding slowly, "I came in search of you, and find you here on your knees weeping and bemoaning the loss of your old lover."

## CHAPTER XI.

### MISS TREVALYN MEETS WITH A SURPRISE.

MISS TREVALYN looked into his face, sharply. "You are quite sure you have but just come?" she interrogated, wondering if by any possible chance he had met the stranger who had but just left the arbor.

"Quite sure," he repeated.

Miss Trevalyn would have given much to have asked that question—but dared not. After a few moments' pause she asked nervously, "And now that you have found me, may I ask what you want with me, sir?"

He drew nearer her, looking with eager admiring eyes on the beautiful face so coldly proud. "If you were less haughty with me it would be easier to talk with you, Helen," he said.

He waited a moment, but as she made no answer he continued:—"I am obliged to leave this place on Wednesday next. This is Monday, and, of course, I cannot consent to leave you behind me, so that will necessitate the consummation of our marriage much sooner than we arranged for. The ceremony must be performed—tomorrow."

A cry of dismay broke from Miss Trevalyn's lips. "I protest against this coercion," she cried. "I resent it most bitterly. Heaven knows I hated you deeply enough before, but now—"

"Stop!" he cried, "you goad me too far. There is a limit to even my patience and endurance. Repeat those

words, and I swear to you I shall declare this marriage off. My next step will be to unmask the squire by placing him in custody of the officers of the law. Either submit quietly to the decree, or state that you refuse. It is becoming a matter of indifference to me, I assure you."

A piteous, wailing cry fell from the girl's lips.

"Remember there is no coercion in this matter. You are at perfect liberty to do as you choose, Miss Trevalyn."

"You know I cannot but choose to submit," she sobbed, "for my father's sake."

"Well, when can the ceremony take place?" he asked, frowning impatiently.

"It matters little to me," she retorted, bitterly; "as soon one time as another, since the cruel sacrifice *must* be made."

"Will to-morrow, at this time, suit you?" he asked, briefly.

She nodded wearily, turned abruptly away, too proud to let him see the tears that gathered in her dark eyes. "Make what arrangements you will. If my life *must* be spent with you, a day's or a week's respite will not matter much," repeated the girl huskily.

His eyes gleamed darkly as he looked at her. How he longed with all his soul to tear away that barrier of cold pride behind which she had intrenched herself and trample it beneath his feet, to drag this queenly girl down to his level. What a revenge he would take upon her for scorning him and his love so bitterly. He would make life one long torture for her—for

"Next to love revenge is sweet."

he told himself.

He had settled it that the wedding should take place the following afternoon.

"I will have carriages to the door at three precisely, in the afternoon," he said, rising. "Will that suit you?"

Miss Trevalyn bowed coldly.

"Good afternoon, my fair Helen," he said, throwing her a kiss most gracefully from his finger tips, which she did not so much as deign to notice. "Rest assured I shall be punctual."

It was not until after Mr. Harper had turned and left her that Helen's courage, which she had made such an effort to preserve, gave way utterly.

"Oh, God!" she cried, raising up her white hand, and sobbing to Heaven in the very fulness of her overwrought heart, "would that there was no to-morrow for me." There was a smothered moan and a heavy fall, which brought Rachel hurrying to the arbor with all possible speed.

"The Lord have mercy!" she cried, with a gasp. "I thought I heard a crash in the arbor. It is Miss Helen, lying prone on her face, and in a dead faint."

Raising the slight figure in her strong arms, Helen was taken back to her own room at once, placed in bed, and restoratives applied. Then the dark eyes slowly opened.

"You fainted, my dear," said Rachel.

She wondered why the girl turned her face to the wall with as bitter a cry as ever fell from human lips.

All night long Miss Trevalyn paced the floor of her room, crying out to herself that she wished the light of morning would never break. At last day dawned pink and golden over the eastern hills, the birds sang joyously in the branches of the trees, the sun shone with a golden radiance of the waking earth—all nature seemed as joyous as though a human heart was not destined to be broken ere yonder sun should set.

"It is morning," murmured Helen, locking her hands tightly together as she stood by the window, "and my

wedding day. Yes, ere yonder sun shall set I shall have been sacrificed as the price of my poor father's safety, his honor, and perhaps his *life!*"

In her girlish, rosy day-dreams of the past—before this dark and awful shadow had fallen upon her—she had wondered what her wedding day would be like; for it is always the grandest epoch of a fair maiden's life.

She had pictured it all out to herself, as young girls will; how particular she would be over her toilet; how wondrous happy she would be; and how her heart would beat, her cheeks crimson, and her eyes brighten as the propitious hour drew near.

Ah me! those were only dreams! How different the reality was!

Fate had parted her from the man she loved, and now she was to wed another, one whom she hated and feared. Without the bond of love between them, how desolate her future would be.

Meanwhile Eugene Montgomery, the faithful friend, who had been fortunate enough to catch the outward bound train, was rapidly speeding on toward the far off hamlet where Arthur Douglas lay, slowly convalescing from a dangerous illness.

"How shall I ever give him Miss Trevalyn's message," he ruminated ruefully, "he is hardly strong enough to bear it—and yet, the most cruel thing I could do would be to encourage false hopes. I would rather have faced a dozen bayonets on the battle-field than encounter the pain in his eyes when I tell him the result of my mission."

It was evening when he reached his destination. Arthur Douglas was listening with pitiful impatience for the sound of his comrade's step on the stair, and as Montgomery threw open the door a glad cry of "Thank Heaven, you are come at last!" broke from his lips.

"You have seen my darling—Montgomery!" he murmured eagerly. "Give me her letter! I—I—have restrained my impatience long hours! It is cruel to keep me waiting another instant."

"My poor Arthur," said Montgomery huskily. He had been endeavoring to frame what he had to say in suitable language during his entire journey, but he got but the more hopelessly mixed up.

"Did you see Helen?" questioned Arthur eagerly.

"Yes," he said, hesitatingly.

"And you brought me back a letter from her?" he interrogated, with confident expectancy.

"No," returned Montgomery, thinking to himself what a bungling mess people made of it who attempted to mediate between parted lovers. "Miss Trevalyn gave me no written message for you, Arthur—only a verbal one, and it is this—that you can be nothing more to her—that she is done with you forever!"

Arthur Douglas fell back upon his pillow as though he had been shot.

"D—— it!" muttered Montgomery, springing forward in great consternation. "I *knew* I should make a mess of this affair. It takes a woman to tell anything of this kind, and take the sting out of cruel words."

"Did—did—Helen—say that?" moaned the sick man. "Oh, my God! is there not some mistake?"

"I wish to Heaven that I could have told you anything else," burst out Montgomery, "but I had to give you her message, Arthur, hard as it was."

"There is but one construction to put to it," moaned Arthur Douglas, burying his face in his hands, "*Helen believes me guilty!* I wish to God you had let me die instead of nursing me back to life when you came here and found me so ill!" he cried, fiercely.

“Try to be calm, Douglas,” urged his friend. “Remember another relapse in your case would be fatal.”

“Would to heaven that I never left this bed alive !” he cried, with bitter recklessness. “What would life be worth to me—without *her* ! Do you remember, Montgomery, the lines that were written about a man whom they parted from the woman he loved ? They come back to me now, as I lie here, and never were words more applicable to my case. Listen to them, Montgomery, as near as I can recall them they run something like this :—

“ I know that the sentence of death is written  
Against our love by the hand of fate ;  
I know all the joy of our lives is smitten  
A deadly blow by the direst hate ;  
That our pleasant past with its mem’ries tender,  
Its dreams and its hopes, which they deem a crime,  
They would banish from us as the sunset’s splendor  
Is banished by darkness at evening time !

“ But my heart rebels with fiercest passion,  
It will not submit to their stern decree ;  
Love cannot be slain in murd’rous fashion—  
Like a giant it struggles for mastery.  
Though they bury it deep in their deadly malice,  
Crushing out as they think its latest breath,  
Yet with strength renewed—as from blood-filled chalice—  
It will rise to prove that love knows no death !

“ If love is a crime—a sinful passion—  
Why then should a God, so good and so wise  
Have moulded our hearts in such wondrous fashion  
That nothing but love e’er satisfies ?  
If it be a sin, and only repenting  
And firmly forsaking brings pardon divine,  
Then my soul must be doomed to woes unrelenting,  
For no change e’er can come to a love such as mine ! ”



"Douglas, my dear fellow, do not excite yourself," exclaimed Montgomery anxiously; "excitement is bad for you. When the doctor comes he will find you much worse if you go on like this."

Montgomery's predictions were verified. By midnight, Arthur Douglas grew so alarmingly worse that the old doctor who attended him was sent for in all haste.

"If he pulls through it this time, it will be a miracle," he said, gravely shaking his head. "He must have had some great shock to bring this state of affairs about."

As the long hours dragged their slow lengths by, it was a hard sight to see him tossing in delirium feverishly upon his bed. Two attendants beside Montgomery lingered at his bedside, and they looked at each other pityingly—for they were tender-hearted women—to hear him plead with some one not to refuse his hand although it was stained with blood. And then again he fancied himself on the gallows, looking down at the gaping crowd standing below, crying out in a loud clear voice that before his God he could not say whether he was innocent or guilty.

"Such strange thoughts for the poor young man to have," said one of the women, laying her cool hand on his feverish brow. He drew it down to his lips and kissed it fervently, imagining it to be Miss Trevalyn's hand.

"Helen, my darling!" he whispered fondly, "I knew you loved me still. Come nearer, let me fold you in my arms, Helen, while I whisper these words, so sweet and true.

"Love me if I live!  
Love me if I die!  
What to me is life or death,  
So that thou be nigh?"

"Ah! what is there I could not  
For thy sake endure?"

“ Kiss me for my love !  
Pay me for my pain !  
Come ! and murmur in my ear  
How thou lov'st again ! ”

## CHAPTER XII.

SHE IS AS FALSE AS SHE IS FAIR.

AT midnight the fever seemed to reach its height, and by the time morning broke cold and gray over the hills, it had spent itself, and once again Arthur Douglas became conscious of events that were transpiring around him. He found his faithful friend, Montgomery, seated by his bedside.

"I think you will pull through this relapse all right, my boy," said Montgomery, cheerily, "but you want to take care not to let this thing occur again,—you—you were wrong in permitting your sorrow to get the best of you. Face the troubles of life like a man."

"Life has little enough attractions for me now," sighed Arthur, "but my grief shall not overpower me. That the one I love believes me guilty is a thought more bitter than the pangs of death to me. She has dealt not only my heart, but my pride a terrible blow. From this moment I shall do my best to try to forget her if it lays within human power.

"No longer I follow a sound,  
No longer a dream I pursue,  
Oh, happiness—not to be found,  
Unattainable treasure adieu."

"I shall go back to the army and in the heat of battle find oblivion from the agony of my own thoughts.

"Perhaps my darling was right after all," he rumi-

nated, "in refusing to clasp a hand that may be stained with a stain so deep and horrible that all time cannot efface it. Better that I never look upon her face again than see her turn from me in horror too great for words; *that* would *kill* me, strong man though I am. From this hour the name of Helen Trevalyn shall never again pass my lips."

"You will be wise if you adhere to this resolution," said Montgomery.

In the mean time, at this same hour of the early morning a strange event was taking place at Trevalyn Villa.

Since early dawn, a motionless figure had been standing at the open window, with hands clasped and eyes gazing out into space, too intent for seeing.

"To-day will see the beginning of the bitter end," muttered Helen, pressing her clenched hands tightly over her heart. "Ah, well, the sooner it is over the better it will be for me, perhaps. The reality of standing at the altar with Hubert Harper to-day, cannot be much worse than the dread of it."

The air of the house seemed to choke her, and putting on her hat, Helen went down into the garden all heedless of the dew. How long she sat on her favorite seat by the fountain she never knew, she became suddenly aware that there was an unusual commotion in the house, by the rushing about of the servants. Rachel, her maid, came hurrying up to her with a white, scared face.

"Oh, Miss Helen," she cried, wringing her hands, "do come into the house quickly; there is something terribly wrong in master's room!"

Miss Trevalyn quickly preceded the girl to the squire's apartment. She met Peters at the door.

"What is the matter with father?" she asked, anxiously. "Is he ill?"

"He is—*dead*, ma'am," answered the man, huskily.

A low cry broke from Miss Trevalyn's lips.

"Dead!" she echoed. "Oh, Peters, it *cannot* be! When I left him last evening he was alive and well; surely death could not have claimed him so suddenly."

"He is quite dead, ma'am," returned Peters. "Last night he paced the floor of his room for long hours after the house was still and dark; it was a habit he had fallen into of late. When I came to him a little while since I found him seated in his chair by the window. One glance at his stark, white face, and I knew the truth—the squire was dead!"

Miss Trevalyn fled like a startled swallow past him up to the arm-chair in which a still, straight figure sat erect, with folded hands, and a smile, cold and bleak, frozen on the white face. She flung her arms around that still form with an awful cry that made those who heard it weep tears of pity for her, and kissed the rigid lips that give back no answering caress. She dropped her arms from their clasp about him, and drew back and looked at him. Could this be her father? Could this be the father who always had a smile for her and a tender caress, sitting by the window so cold and still? A feeling of credulity stole over her. She looked at him steadfastly, a great, awful amazement in her dilated eyes. Was this the father whom she remembered so well since infancy as the great prop of her young life? Could *this* be he?—this white, awful, beautiful statue?

She fell down at his feet besieging heaven to let her die too; and it seemed to the girl that the best part of her died then and there. Who has not felt this awful, grief-stricken feeling as they stood gazing on the face of a loved one cold in the icy embrace of death? A mighty desolation filled her heart. How can the world go on the same, she wondered, dully, if he be taken from it? But *is* he dead? Surely, it must be some awful dream

from which she will awaken presently. For the first time in her life she felt a bitter rebellion toward the God who could thus smite her.

There was the sound of footsteps approaching. It was Rachel. She tried to lift the girl up from her knees but Helen resisted her.

"Come away, poor dear! you are breaking your heart," she said. "Try and be calm; all your wild grief cannot bring him back."

"Let me stay—I am doing no harm here," the girl answered, dully, but Rachel was firm, and, half carrying the slight form, she drew her gently from the room.

In the corridor, she came face to face with her step-mother, who had just returned from a morning drive. "Helen, can it be true that the squire is dead!" she cried, hurrying breathlessly up to the girl.

"Yes," answers Helen with a sob; she tried to say more but could not, the words stuck in her throat.

"Dead! Dear me!" cried young Mrs. Trevalyn. "How badly I shall look in a widow's cap! and—and sombre black gowns make one look so old."

"My lady!" exclaimed Rachel, "see how your words are hurting the squire's daughter."

"That recalled young Mrs. Trevalyn to her senses. Without a look at Helen's death-white face, she hurried past her to her own boudoir, which was in the opposite direction from where the squire was.

"God forgive her for being so heartless as to think of her good looks in an hour like this," muttered Rachel, indignantly.

At that moment a stifled cry broke from Helen's lips, for, looking up, she saw Mr. Harper rapidly approaching her, and a great nervousness seized her, for she saw that he had thrown off the disguise of the gardener and

appeared once more before her as—Mr. Harper the detective.

He gained Helen's side and with a low bow attempted to take her hand.

"You may go, Rachel," she said, to her maid, "I—I will see this—gentleman—alone."

Waving him into the drawing-room opposite, Miss Trevalyn followed, closing the door after her.

"Why are you here?" she panted, drawing back with loathing from his outstretched hand.

"Is this not rather a cool reception from the woman who has promised to be my bride within the next few hours?" he asked reproachfully.

"That has occurred which causes me to say that the marriage will never take place now," she said looking at him mechanically.

"You are pleased to indulge in innuendoes, Miss Trevalyn he cried angrily. "You *dare not* refuse to live up to your part of the contract knowing how fully your father, the old squire, is in my power. One word from me and he would swing from the gallows. Surely it should be unnecessary to remind you of this fact."

"You can never hurt him more," she answered, "for, *my father died this morning*; he is beyond your power now."

Something very like an imprecation broke from the detective's lips. Could it be possible that the cup of happiness which was so near him was to be dashed from him just as he was on the point of grasping it? He would not believe that the fates which had always aided him would play him so hard a trick now, when all of the happiness of his future was at stake. He was used to thinking in all cases with the rapidity of lightning, and, in this propitious moment, he was not at a loss for a ready reply.

"Be it even so, that the squire is dead, that will not lessen your obligation in this matter, my dear Miss Trevalyn," he said coolly, adding slowly, "I am sure you could never see his name dragged through the mire, by having him branded before the world as the murderer of the Earl of Dunraven."

The girl's breast rose and fell convulsively. Those words, the covert threat against her dear dead seemed to scorch her heart, as they fell on her ears. She seemed in that moment a changed being, all in an instant to turn from a terrified girl to a self-reliant, defiant woman. She took a step near him and looked at him steadily with those dark proud eyes of hers.

"You could never prove that charge against my father even if you did bring it against him," she said in a low, intense voice—"I *defy* you to do it."

"I heard his confession and you heard it," he retorted. "I would summon you before the court and compel you to repeat the story we both listened to, which would coincide in every particular. Your testimony alone, my dear Miss Trevalyn, could not fail to lay this tragedy at his door."

"You could not force me to utter one word of what passed between my father and myself on that memorable night. You might cast me into prison for contempt, you might torture me on the rack,—as they did victims in the olden days,—you might *kill* me, but never, not even in the hour of death would I break the oath with which my father bound me that night—to never breathe one word of what I heard from his lips. I repeat that you are powerless. You cannot hurt the dead, and therefore to sacrifice myself by marrying you, abhorring you as I do, would be a crime. I decline to discuss the matter further and beg you to respect my grief by leaving me at once with my dead."



Hubert Harper's face was a study as he arose to his feet.

"Listen to my words and heed them well, Miss Trevalyn," he said harshly. "If you send me away from you I shall make you rue it to the last day of your life."

"It is unmanly to attempt to intimidate a defenceless woman," replied Miss Trevalyn, opening the door for him to pass out.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### DEATH.

I am the key that parts the gates of fame ;  
I am the cloak that covers cowering shame ;  
I am the final goal of every race ;  
I am the storm tossed spirit's resting place.

'The messenger of swift and sure relief,  
Welcomed with wailing and reproachful grief ;  
The friend of those who have no friend but me,  
I break all chains and set all captives free.

I am the cloud that, when earth's day is done  
An instant veils an unextinguished sun ;  
I am the brooding hush that follows strife,  
The waking from a dream that man calls—life ! ”

Two weeks had gone by since the memorable day of the squire's death.

He had been laid at rest with all honor beside the dear wife who had gone on years before, and it filled Helen with the deepest emotion to see how the whole country for miles around turned out to pay homage to his memory and follow him to the grave with tears in their eyes, low voices recounting here and there, “ what a shining example his life had been.”

How the people had loved him ! Ah, Heaven ! how cruel it would have been to have dragged his name through the mire of dishonor and crime. Helen trembled like an aspen leaf when she contemplated it.

There was one thing that troubled Helen not a little as the days dragged their slow lengths by, and that was the vague wonder as to what had become of Mr. Harper, the detective. He had vanished as completely from her view since the morning on which she had held that last and memorable interview with him, as though the earth had slowly opened and swallowed him. Had he given up the quest as easily as this? she often found herself wondering. It certainly looked like it. Still one is always more in fear of a foe who strikes from under cover than one who strikes at you boldly above board.

For days and nights after the old squire had been laid at rest Helen would walk the floor of her room in poignant agony too deep for words, for the thought had come to her, would she never meet the father she had loved so, *up there?* God had written in his holy book that "the murderer shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Standing face to face with the story of his confession, the girl had told herself that it must surely have been he who struck down the earl in a moment of frenzy. In these moments of bitterness and pitiful loneliness how her heart yearned for the lover whom she had sent from her! She remembered the address given her by his friend, Mr. Montgomery, how he had said that her Arthur was ill and among strangers. If she could but go to him and nurse him back to health and strength.

But they could never be anything to each other again, never, for was not she the daughter of—a criminal? She always told herself this in a whisper, and with a great burst of sobs, ruminating,—“that not even to Arthur would she ever acknowledge the secret which was buried with the old squire in his grave, for, no matter what his sin had been, he was her father, and his memory was sacred to her. She had loved him through all, better than her own life.

So great was her yearning to go to Arthur in his illness that at length she confided to Rachel her plan to go and nurse him.

"Oh, Miss Helen," cried Rachel, "I never dreamed that you knew where young Mr. Douglas was. When did you hear from him?"

"A few days before father died," confessed Helen.

"You were very wise not to mention to any one but me, about knowing his whereabouts, for, rest assured, that sneak of a detective is still searching for him," declared Rachel.

Squire Trevalyn's estate had been settled up with less delay than is usual in such cases. It was found that he was badly insolvent, and his property was mortgaged for far more than it was worth. Everything was swept away, save a small tract of land which had been deeded to the daughter, Helen, years before.

Few people ever found out that the most of the squire's property had vanished in the purchase of numberless sets of diamonds at fabulous prices for the young wife, who, at the earliest moment, and all undreamed of by the fond old donor, converted them quickly into cash, which netted her at the time of his death, a snug little fortune, which was securely and secretly invested in a distant bank.

The friends of Fífine in other days, who knew of her marriage to the supposed rich old country squire, and who always thought of her with great envy thereafter, now laughed uproariously when they read that he had died poor, leaving his fair, young widow but a meagre inheritance. They considered it quite a fine joke upon the gay Fífine to be taken in so neatly by a poor old man, and they did not marvel much when they read in the last paragraph that young Mrs. Trevalyn had mysteriously disappeared.

Every one around and about Branlea felt sorry for Miss Helen. What would she do now? they wondered.

This was soon settled; they learned that Miss Trevalyn, accompanied by her faithful maid, Rachel, who was determined to share her fortunes wherever they might lead, pay or no pay, intended leaving Branlea for a few weeks to assuage her grief after all that she had passed through, and at the end of that time, she was to return and take her place as teacher in one of the village schools.

Miss Trevalyn and Rachel left Branlea the following week, ostensibly for London, but when they reached the cross-roads some eighty miles distant from Branlea, they took a train in quite another direction from the great foggy metropolis.

This plan had been carried out according to Rachel's shrewd ideas, to throw people off their track, as she laughingly explained to the bewildered Helen when they were enroute, adding, that it would never—never have done for them to have gone straight to Bethelwald, where young Mr. Arthur was. But alas! Ah me!

“The best laid schemes o' mice an' men  
Gang aft a-gley,”

as the Scottish poet tells us. So it happened in this case; for neither Rachel nor Helen noticed an old, shabbily dressed man who boarded the same train with them at Branlea, who took a convenient seat near them, so near that his sharp practised ear took in fragments of much of their whispered conversation, and who also changed at the cross-roads, taking the train for Bethelwald when they bought their tickets for that destination.

That they were being kept under close surveillance by this seemingly deaf old man, never once occurred to either Miss Trevalyn or her maid.

It was dusk when she reached the Queen's Inn.

Already the lamps had been lighted, and shone with a ruddy glow athwart the path that led to the front door.

The curtains of an upper apartment had been closely drawn; but Helen could see the shadows of dark forms flitting to and fro across the room.

"Was he worse?" she wondered, "and was that Arthur's room?"

Feeling very much like an intruder, Miss Trevalyn, followed by Rachel, turned the knob of the door and entered softly.

Some one was seated by the window—his face resting on the sill. At the first glance Miss Trevalyn knew who it was, and called to him softly:

"Mr. Montgomery?"

He lifted his head with a quick start, and saw her standing there; in a moment he was beside her.

"I knew you would come! I believed it from the very bottom of my soul. He is worse. But now," he added hopefully, "he will be saved; you will draw him back from the very borders of the other world. Come to him quickly, Miss—every moment is precious."

"Who is with him now?" asked Helen, drawing back as they reached the door.

"Only one of the nurses," replied Mr. Montgomery. "We imagined him convalescing at one time but he took a bad turn and is lower than ever before. The doctor left some little time since, promising to be with us again shortly, but—he—he—told me that his presence would be unavailing—for nothing more, within human power, could be done for Arthur Douglas.

"I could not endure it sitting by his bedside and, hearing him call on you to come to him—without weeping, and—and I went from his bedside that he might not see my tears."

Miss Trevalyn pushed open the door softly, and stood on the threshold.

"Enter—alone—it is best so," whispered Mr. Montgomery to Helen, adding: "Call me when you want me."

Helen heard the door close softly after her, and knew she was standing alone, in the presence of the man she loved.

She advanced toward the couch timidly, and with trembling hands drew aside the heavy curtains from it, and the light from the shaded night-lamp fell with a softened glow on the white face on the pillow.

"Helen," murmured the sufferer, wearily, as he moved his arms restlessly about, "are you *never* coming, dear? Oh, love, if you knew how patiently I have waited for you."

Miss Trevalyn took off her hat and sack, and drew her chair close up to the bedside and sat down.

Oh, how changed he was—handsome still, but sadly changed; and sitting there, holding his hands clasped in hers an impulse stirred in her heart to bend over him and kiss the lips that called on her name so earnestly.

A heavy sigh broke from her lips.

The sigh awoke him; he opened his eyes with a start, murmuring her name.

"I am here, Arthur," she murmured, faintly.

He held out his arms to her, with a passionate cry:

"Helen—thank God, you have come to me—at last."

Arthur Douglas raised his dim eyes to the lovely face of the girl he worshipped so madly, and tears filled them; a low moan broke from his lips. He held her hand clasped tightly, looking at her with an expression—wistful and appealing—that she never forgot.

"I am dying, dear," he whispered, huskily, "but my

soul would not leave its mortal tenement until you came to me—so great is the love I bear you. Bend your sweet face nearer that I may see you ; I can die content now that you are with me.

“Oh, Helen, how I wish that I could take you across the dark river of death with me. It almost seems that I cannot die and leave you here.”

Even at the portals of the tomb the ruling passion of his life held its own.

“Oh, Helen,” he murmured, “you will never realize how dearly I have loved you—loved you with all my heart and soul—idolized you. The words I use to express it seem cold. Ah ! how I wish they could burn their way to your very soul !”

The very vehemence of his worshipful adoration startled her.

He looked at the beautiful little hands, white as lily leaves, which he held.

“Oh, little hands that hold my heart !” he sighed. “Do you remember how I kissed these hands, Helen, under the blossoming apple boughs on the day you promised to be my wife ? kissed them with my whole soul in each burning kiss, knowing they were mine—all mine.”

A shiver shot through her heart ; she made an effort to draw her hands from his grasp, but he held them the tighter.

“In you were centred all my hopes, my ambitions, and dreams of a brilliant future, Helen,” he said, pathetically.

The pathos that trembled in his voice and shone in his eyes could not help but touch her.

“Helen,” he went on, “will you think of me when I am gone ? Will you come to my grave, and, as you kneel there remember the words I am saying to you now ? The heart that beat with a love surpassing all others will



lie cold and still; but you will remember, my darling, that in life it beats only for you, my own true love—my love who was so soon to have been my wife.”

“Don’t, Arthur, don’t!” she sobbed. “I cannot bear it!”

Every word he uttered was like the sharp blade of a dagger in her heart.

The words on her lips were arrested just then by the entrance of the doctor.

The doctor’s surprise was great at seeing a young and beautiful girl sitting by Mr. Douglas’ bedside. He hurried forward in the greatest of alarm, but Rachel, who had followed him in, laid a detaining hand on his arm.

“She was his betrothed bride; she knows all about the dangerous fever, and does not fear it. Her place is at his bedside,” she said.

Hearing this, the doctor offered no remonstrance to Miss Trevalyn’s presence there; still he looked greatly troubled. But, as he approached the bed, and bent over his patient, his face cleared, and a cry of surprise broke from his lips.

“There is a decided change for the better,” he declared decisively. “I think he will live.”

“I knew it,” murmured Mr. Montgomery brokenly; “you have drawn Arthur back from the dark valley of the shadow of death by your presence—back to life and the world from which he was slipping.”

“After a good deep sleep he will awaken refreshed,” said the doctor. “For the first time during his illness his mind seems to be perfectly at rest; see, he has dropped into a peaceful slumber, with a smile on his lips.”

Miss Trevalyn could not find words to thank God for His mercy, her heart was so full of gratitude.

Who is it that says, "a prayer granted is sometimes a curse?"

The time was coming when she who loved Arthur Douglas best would say it was the greatest pity that he had not died in this illness; he would then have died with her hope of heaven infolding him.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### A SPY.

“Thou wilt choose the path of fame,  
And barter peace to gain a name.  
But when honors most increase,  
Thou wilt mourn departed peace.  
May it ere be won again?  
Ask thy heart—nor ask in vain.”

“You walk the sunny side of fate,  
The wise world smiles and calls you great.  
The golden fruitage of success  
Drops at your feet in plenteousness;  
And you have blessings manifold;  
Renown and power and friends and gold,  
They build a wall between us twain  
That may not be thrown down again.  
Alas, for I the long time through  
Have loved you better than you knew.”

THE shabbily clad stranger who had travelled in the same coach with Miss Trevalyn and her maid from Branlea, also found occasion to put up at the Queen's Inn when he reached Bethelwald. After partaking of a particularly hearty meal for so feeble an appearing old man, he repaired to the porch to enjoy a smoke. He was not ill-pleased to find his host there, engaged in the same favorite pastime.

“Few strangers happen this way, I should imagine,”

he ventured, after they had been talking for some time on indifferent subjects.

"Not many," assented the old innkeeper, "but just now the house is full, and of quality, too. We have two very fine gentlemen here, and really I shouldn't be a bit surprised to learn that they were lords or dukes, or something like that. One of them has been very ill indeed since he has been here. Twice we thought it would be all up with him."

"What does he seem to be suffering from?" inquired the stranger.

"The gentlemen don't want it to get noised about, but I don't mind if I do tell *you*," responded the innkeeper. "They want to make me believe it's an accident, as came very near doin' him up—but I opine that he tried his best to commit suicide—the first night he came here."

"Ah!" exclaimed the stranger with a show of interest in his keen gray eyes.

"Yes, indeed!" pursued the venerable host, and straightway he proceeded to give his new guest a complete resumé of the whole affair, adding in conclusion :

"A fine young lady from up country has come to-night to nurse him through it. She is his sweetheart, I am sure, by the way they wept and embraced when she came into the room and went up to the couch. Did you speak, sir?" asked the innkeeper suddenly turning to the stranger.

"No," returned the other shortly. "Go on with your story. I am interested in it."

"There is nothing more to tell, sir, save this : that the lady's maid hinted to my good woman that there might be a wedding here, when the young man grew better and that when her young mistress left this place, it might be, as—the young gentleman's bride."

The stranger had risen hastily from his seat and commenced pacing rapidly to and fro across the porch. The unintelligible words he was uttering, were like so much Greek to the old innkeeper. Shortly after, he took up his light and sought his room. After fastening the door, he proceeded to divest himself of the blue goggles he wore, together with the gray wig and beard, and Mr. Harper stood revealed before the small mirror that confronted him.

"It is always a safe rule to follow, if you are hunting a man down, to keep careful surveillance upon the woman with whom he is in love, and sooner or later she will lead you to her lover when she imagines all interest in his whereabouts has lulled down. I have kept close guard over the post-office at Branlea, and I am positive that no letter passed between them. How she discovered where to come to him is—to me—an enigma, which I shall not attempt to solve at present.

"So she intends to marry the young gentleman, and leave this place—his bride, does she? Ah, well, my fair Helen, the fates have decreed otherwise, as you shall soon determine. I have sworn that you shall never marry Arthur Douglas, and you shall see how easily it can be prevented. What are a hundred, aye, a thousand lives that are at stake in the issue of a great battle? Why then, should I hesitate even for an instant when the great battle of my life is to be fought—for the life of one man who stands in my way? I am as squeamish as an old woman over this affair. Let me be content with the knowledge that Douglas will be given the opportunity to prove his innocence of the crime laid at his door—if he can."

For a week, Harper watched the progress of affairs keenly. It was an easy matter to gain access to the room by inducing the old innkeeper to allow *him* to carry

ice-water to the sick-room when it was called for, to get a look at the pretty young girl and the supposed lord, and the innkeeper was only too glad of his services in this respect.

He could scarcely restrain his rage when he entered one day and saw Helen sitting by the couch holding Arthur Douglas' hand. Montgomery on one side of her and faithful Rachel on the other.

By the end of a week, after Helen's arrival, Arthur Douglas' recovery was so rapid that the doctor agreed that he could with perfect safety leave Bethelwald whenever he felt strong enough to undertake the journey. Three days after this decision the innkeeper informed Harper that the wedding which he had spoken to him about had been arranged to take place that very night.

A quiet smile lit up the face which the heavy gray beard and the blue goggles almost concealed.

"Indeed," he said, as he saw that the old innkeeper was looking for some reply.

"Yes," declared his informant, "and a long wedding journey they intend to make of it."

"Where do they go?" asked Harper, with apparent indifference.

"They take the midnight train direct for London," explained the innkeeper, "and there, they will be just in time to catch the out-going steamer 'Servia,' which goes to America. I hope they will have a happy life of it—the bonny gentlemen and that pretty young girl."

Again the old innkeeper noticed the odd smile that passed over the stranger's face and wondered at it.

"At what time do you say that they have arranged for the marriage to take place?" he asked impatiently, and the reply was:—"At nine to-night."

Harper looked at his watch. It wanted twenty min-

utes to ten, A.M. He replaced the watch in his pocket, and, crossing the porch, strolled leisurely down the walk. When he was beyond sight of the old innkeeper, he quickened his pace with great alacrity, and scarcely took time to breathe until he found himself at the telegraph office at the station.

Again a long cipher telegram was flashed over the wires to the chief in London, then, very leisurely, he returned to the inn to await future developments.

Helen and Arthur Douglas were standing hand in hand together at the window as he advanced up the path.

"Poor old man," murmured Helen, compassionately, "see how he is bent with the weight of years, Arthur. He was talking with Rachel yesterday and told her that 'he was all alone in the world'—those words made me feel great compassion for him."

"Perhaps it is selfish, but I can think of no one but ourselves and our own great happiness, my Helen," said Arthur, fondly pressing the little white hand he held.

"I can scarcely believe at times that heaven is about to answer my only prayer—of giving you to me, darling. Oh, Helen, what a noble life I intend to make of my future, for your dear sake. I would have foregone my hope of heaven, to have purchased such joy. You can tell by that how dear you are to me."

"Hush, Arthur," responded Miss Trevalyn, reproachfully, "there is no happiness so great in this world, that we should wish to barter the hope of heaven for it."

"It is rather a cowardly thing to do,—steal away from my native land with the shadow of a crime hanging over me,—but now that I have your assurance that, from the depths of your heart you look upon me as innocent, I have yielded to your entreaties, and to my friend Montgomery's, by adopting the course he has mapped out for us. But I never shall feel at rest in my conscience until

all the world knows, beyond the shadow of a doubt, just who slew the Earl of Dunraven. How you are trembling, Helen dear."

"Never refer to it again, Arthur," she murmured with a half sob; you—you—gave me your promise you would not."

He raised the little white hand reverentially to his lips. "Your will shall ever be my law, Helen," he said gravely. "If the subject brings you so much pain, I will not mention it again. You are sure you will not regret marrying—a poor man, dear?" he asked wistfully.

"Am I not quite as poor as yourself now?" retorted Helen, with a tearful smile. "I am no longer Miss Trevalyn, the prospective heiress,—and, but for this marriage, would now be Miss Trevalyn, the village teacher."

"We will begin life with only love for our capital, dear," said Arthur, "but we will be happy, for we have each other."

How little the lovers dreamed as they stood there together, looking out into the bright warm sunshine, and talking over their plans for the future, that this was the happiest hour they were ever to know. It is well for us oftentimes, that we cannot lift the curtain of the future and peer beyond the portals of the present into the vast dim, unknown realm, toward which we are drifting with each pulsation of life's wheel.

Slowly the hands of time moved that day, but at last the sun sunk in the west, the dusk of evening crept up and settled slowly into the darkness of night; one by one the golden hearted stars came out and fixed themselves in the blue heavens, and as the hours rolled by, the time set for the wedding that evening, drew nearer.

The ceremony was to be performed in the living-room, which was the best apartment the Queen's Inn



afforded. And at fifteen minutes before nine, the minister arrived.

The surroundings and occasion admitted of little ceremony, and a few moments later, Miss Trevalyn, wearing her travelling dress, and leaning upon Mr. Montgomery's arm entered the room, followed by Rachel and all the attachés of the inn, to whom a wedding was certainly a novel sight to witness.

Arthur Douglas was already there, conversing with the minister. He advanced with beaming face and outstretched hands to meet Helen—and, obeying a sudden impulse he stooped and kissed the lovely lips which were colorless as snowdrops. "Courage, Helen, my darling!" he whispered, "a few moments more, and you will be all my own."

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE LOVERS.

MISS TREVALYN raised her bright, blushing face timidly to her lover's, and, drawing her hand fondly within his arm he led her up to the old minister who stood patiently awaiting the pleasure of the bridal couple as to when the ceremony should begin.

Helen was presented to the old minister by the happy bridegroom-elect, and after the exchange of a few pleasant words they took their places before him.

But the ceremony which would have joined together those two who loved each other so fondly, was not destined to proceed further than this, for at that moment a ringing sound of horse's hoofs fell upon their ears and the sound of men dismounting at the porch outside, and an instant later, four men wearing the garb of officers of the law pushed aside the wondering crowd about the door and filed quickly into the room headed by Harper.

"There is your man," he said, pointing to Arthur Douglas; "do your duty."

"What is the meaning of this interruption, gentlemen?" asked the minister mildly, seeing that both groom and bride were too agitated to speak.

One of the officers of the law stepped forward, laying a heavy hand on the shoulder of the man who stood motionless by Miss Trevalyn's side, his face as white as it would ever be in death.

"There will be no wedding here to-night," said the

officer, "for this gentleman, Arthur Douglas, is wanted at Branlea to answer to the charge of murdering the Earl of Dunraven, on the night of June 12th, in Trevalyn Park."

The effect these words produced upon the throng gathered about the door to witness the marriage was something like an electric shock.

A murderer! That fair-faced, handsome young man, standing by the side of his bonny, blushing bride-elect! Surely there must be some mistake! and they gathered eagerly about the principals in this unexpected drama in real life which was being played before their eyes, crowded eagerly forward, despite the command to "*stand back!*" The bride-elect had swooned.

Sobbing as though her heart would break, faithful Rachel bore Miss Trevalyn from the room. At first she thought that the terrible ordeal through which she had passed had killed her young mistress. But no! the heart beat faintly, the pulse of life had not stopped yet. It was not destined that Miss Trevalyn was to leave this world of trouble so soon.

Although they did everything in their power to revive her, it was long hours ere she opened her eyes to consciousness. Rachel was bending over her stroking the dark curls back from her pale face. Miss Trevalyn reached out and caught her hands, clinging to them with a bitter cry.

"Tell me! where is Arthur, Rachel?" she sobbed wildly. "Did—did—they—take him away?"

"Yes," answered Rachel, striving to keep back her own emotion and control her husky voice.

"Tell me all that happened, Rachel," she moaned.

"Oh, not now, Miss Helen," she entreated, "you are not able to endure it."

"I could not endure the suspense of waiting another

moment for you to tell me, Rachel," she persisted. "Don't you know that suspense kills quicker than anything else? Tell me all—I will try to be very calm. It seems to me that I can bear anything now, I—I have suffered and borne so much since—papa—died."

With tears in her eyes and her voice husky with emotion, Rachel told her how they tore Master Arthur from her side, though he fought them desperately as she was being carried from the room, and sought to kiss her cold lips and clasp in his arms for the last time the girl who was so soon to have been his wife, and from whom they were parting him—perhaps forever.

"But Mr. Harper, that despicable detective, who tracked him down, hurled him back," added Rachel indignantly, "and they hurried Arthur off on the midnight train. They have reached Branlea by this time and have confined him in the Branlea jail, and there he must remain until the September Assizes."

Rachel is quite right; the girl has not strength enough to bear this cruel intelligence calmly. The fountains of her soul are altogether broken up within her, and she falls to weeping mightily; and but for that weeping, she would perhaps have died, some say; but I think not. For why should grief, being our natural element, kill us any more than the dew the flowers, or the air the birds?

"Oh, if we could but save him, Rachel!" she cried vehemently. "We must try. He is innocent."

"I am sure of his innocence," declared Rachel. "Oh, Miss Helen," she added earnestly, "if we could but secure the services of Mr. Caldwell, the eminent lawyer, who has the reputation of being the most clever in such cases of any lawyer in all London. He could open his prison doors, speedily, and set him free if any one could."

The name of Mr. Caldwell, the famous London lawyer, was not unfamiliar to Helen. She had often heard the squire remark upon his wonderful success in gaining the most difficult cases for his clients. She knew too that this man was famous in many countries; he was an indefatigable and earnest worker, and so important were his services deemed that phenomenal fees were frequently paid to secure them.

Wealthy, and held in almost exaggerated esteem for his abilities, it was confidently predicted that the highest honors of the state were in store for him, and it was ungrudgingly admitted—so far above his peers did he stand—that the loftiest office would be dignified by association with his name. As leader of a forlorn hope he was unrivalled. He had an insatiable appetite for obstacles; criminal cases of great moment, in which life and liberty were in imminent peril, and in which there was a dark mystery to be solved, possessed an irresistible fascination for him. Labor such as this was afforded him the keenest pleasure. The more intricate the task the closer his study of it; the deeper the mystery the greater his patience in the unravelling of it; the more powerful the odds against him the more determined his exertions to win the battle. His microscopic, penetrating mind detected the minutest flaw, seized the smallest detail likely to be of advantage to him, and frequently from the most trivial thread he spun a strand so strong as to drag the ship that was falling to pieces to a safe and secure haven. His satisfaction at these achievements was unbounded, but he rarely allowed an expression of exultation to escape him. His outward tranquillity, even in supreme crises, was little less than marvellous. His nerve was of iron, and to his most intimate associates his inner life was a sealed book.

“If we could but secure the services of Mr. Caldwell,

Rachel," sobbed Miss Trevalyn, "but, I am afraid he would want more than we could pay him. Arthur is poor, you know, and I—I—am reduced to almost want. I will earn the money teaching and—"

There was a tap at the door.

"A letter for Miss Trevalyn," said the little maid.

Rachel took it from her hand and carried it to her mistress.

"From—Mr. Caldwell!" Helen gasped, as she ran her eye over the brief type-written page. It read as follows:

"MISS HELEN TREVALYN:

*"My Dear Madam:*

"I am requested by my clients, Messrs. Mitchell and Haynes, to negotiate with you for the purchase of a tract of land owned by you, lying directly south of Trevalyn Park. I am instructed to offer you the sum of fifty thousand pounds for the same. The property has acquired new value, owing to the fact that a valuable vein of ore has been discovered in this vicinity, and it is but just for me to inform you that this vein extends the entire length of the parcel of land owned by you. I take pleasure in adding that the price offered you, we consider very fair for the purchase of the same.

"Trusting that we may hear from you in reference to this matter at an early date, and that you will look with favor upon our proposition.

"I remain, Madam,

Very truly yours,

"DONALD G. CALDWELL."

Helen looked at her faithful maid with streaming eyes.

"How cruel I was to ever doubt that there was a God," she cried. "Surely, Rachel, it was an all-seeing power who has sent me this wealth in this propitious hour of need!

"How little poor papa or I thought of that same tract

of land in other days. It will make a rich woman of me for life, Rachel, but I will give it all, every penny of it, to set Arthur free. But—but—Rachel, I cannot think how Mr. Caldwell found out that I was here?"

"Don't you see by the envelope that it was sent to Branlea," replied Rachel, "and only yesterday I wrote to Branlea post-office ordering all your mail forwarded here. I—I—thought you would want your letters, if there were any there for you, before you started off on your bridal trip. That's how it happened."

"We must go at once to London, and see Mr. Caldwell," decided Helen.

It was a little past noon on the following day when a coach stopped in front of a London Court, in which was Lawyer Caldwell's office.

Pen in hand, his keen, shrewd face full of deep thought, the famous counsellor sat at a large, square table, deeply engaged in reading a parchment deed that was spread out before him. He was oblivious to everything except the sheet at which he was looking. He started when his clerk opened the door suddenly and announced that a lady wished to see him on very particular business if he were disengaged, at the same time placing before him Miss Trevalyn's card.

"Ah!" exclaimed the lawyer, "the very person I was thinking about. Show her in at once, John."

A moment later Miss Trevalyn stood before him.

Hard and impressible man of law though he was, Mr. Caldwell was just a little startled at the fair vision of girlish loveliness standing before him, and not a little bewildered too, as he took in in the first keen, sweeping glance, that her eyes were red and swollen with tears.

He placed a chair for her with a low bow. "You received my letter, Miss Trevalyn, I infer," he said, "and I am much pleased, I assure you, to hear from you so

soon, and in person, regarding the land I wrote you about. The finding of the vein of ore was purely accidental ; it will prove a bonanza for you, my dear young lady. Let me congratulate you on your good fortune in owning that land."

Miss Trevalyn, who had sunk down into the seat indicated, looked at him with great tears shining in her lovely dark eyes.

"Oh, sir," she faltered piteously, "it is not about the—the—land that I wished to see you. You can have it at the price you mentioned. I am come to see you on a far more important subject than that, on a matter where a human life is at stake. You have heard, I am sure, of the tragedy that—that— took place at Trevalyn Park some few weeks ago. All London was excited over it."

"You mean the murder of the Earl of Dunraven?" he asked kindly, noting her great agitation.

"Yes," she faltered, with a quivering sob. "I wish to engage you to defend the young man who has just been arrested, charged with the crime, for he is innocent, sir; only set him free and I will give you my entire fortune—and—and— bless you to my latest breath."



## CHAPTER XVI.

### THORNS AMID THE ROSES.

LAWYER CALDWELL looked at the lovely tear-stained face of the pretty young girl before him with much sympathy.

"My dear child," he said, "I thank you for the confidence you seem to repose in me. I will do my best certainly, but I cannot assure you with what success. I am familiar with the case as detailed by all the London papers. I read too, in last night's dispatches that the young man, Mr. Arthur Douglas, had been apprehended and taken back to Branlea, just as he was about being united in marriage to *you*. It is he, of course, to whom you refer."

"Yes," replied Helen, "and I repeat, sir, he is innocent. I tell you I *know* he is innocent!" (this vehemently) "for—" The sentence ended in a gasp. The young lady turned so deadly pale that the lawyer sprang quickly to her side fearing she was about to swoon. She recovered herself with a powerful effort, and for a moment, the lawyer's calm steady gray eyes caught and held the terrified glance of the startled dark ones.

"Great God! what had she been about to say!" was the thought that flashed through Helen's brain. She had always heard that the famous lawyer before her was a great mind reader. "Did he know that she was just about to declare that she *knew* Arthur Douglas to be innocent, for—*she—knew—who—committed—the—crime!*"

Noting her great agitation, the lawyer easily turned the conversation into other channels, and shortly Miss Trevalyn regained her self-possession to a great extent. Before she left Mr. Caldwell's office she had his promise that he would undertake the defence, and this meant a great deal from London's famous counsellor : and he had agreed too, to run up to Branlea in the early part of the following week to see Mr. Douglas, relative to the all-important affair.

Helen left the office with tears standing in her eyes, and the memory of her earnest pleading that he would exert every power to save Arthur Douglas, haunted him for many a long hour after.

"Miss Trevalyn is the noblest, grandest woman I have ever met," he mused, and his hard, grim, bachelor heart grew strangely tender. "If I had known such a woman as that, life might have gone differently with me in my early days. I might have had home, wife and children. Heigho! how foolish I am to allow myself to yearn all at once for these things now;" and even though he said that, he bowed his head and wept at the thought that when his last hour would come, it would be the hand of strangers that held a cup of water to his lips; no one would shed a tear for him, his memory would be kept green in no loving heart, no childish hands would plant roses over his grave, the money he had hoarded and made a god of would go to endow public institutions for the benefit of people who had never known him and who cared still less about who or what he had been, so long as they reaped the harvest of the gold he had toiled so hard and so patiently to accumulate, and he thought of that sad plaint of Shelley's :

"Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,  
From the cradle to the grave,

Those ungrateful drones who would  
Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood ?  
Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,  
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm ?  
Or what is it ye buy so dear  
With your pain and with your fear ?  
The seed ye sow another reaps ;  
The wealth ye find another keeps ;  
The robes ye weave another wears ;  
The arms ye forge another bears."

Lawyer Caldwell looked long and earnestly at his face reflected in the mirror, when he reached his lodgings that day.

His hair which had once been so dark and luxuriant, was now heavily streaked with silver threads ; he noted it—and for the first time in his life—with bitter regret. The dark eyes were faded, and the marks of time, which had dealt none too kindly with him, had seamed his face with unsightly lines under the eyes and about the mouth. He certainly looked every hour of his nine-and-forty years.

"It is too late to hope for love *now*," he sighed. "No woman would love me, for myself. I must not allow my mind to indulge in foolish fancies over what might have been, or to think of sweet Helen Trevalyn ; she can never be anything to me—never ! But ah !—heaven help me—how it would please me to know that she thought of me in the light of a true friend."

Suddenly a strange idea came to him, and he did not put it from him, but mused over it until at last it became his constant thought.

It was the middle of the following week ere he reached Branlea, and without waiting to taste food or drink (so deep was the interest in this case), he drove straightway to Branlea jail. He had more than ordinary interest in

seeing the prisoner, and awaited with some curiosity his first glance at him.

Lawyer Caldwell formed instantaneous impressions of the people with whom he came in contact. He was a careful phrenologist and studied faces very accurately. This gave him a knowledge of persons, and a power over them which he could never have possessed in any other way. He was wont to say: "Half of the people in the world went wrong, making most grievous mistakes simply through ignorance in not making themselves familiar with this great study," and to agree with a great author of the day who has said:

"The face, as a whole with its accompanying expression, reveals one's nature and animal propensities. It likewise shows whether the faculties are active or passive, while the head shows their size and proportion to one another. Every feature of the face has its appropriate manifestation. The forehead portrays the amount of intellect. The chin tells us how much persistence, ardor, intensity and the *kind* of affectionate desire one possesses. The mouth shows how much affection one has—whether friendly, sociable, warm-hearted or the reverse. The nose represents the selfish traits and propensities—those qualities of mind that make men bold, fearless, aggressive, far-seeing, defensive, determined and accumulative.

"Although every person has a distinct character, yet there are certain types of character, and every person belongs to one or another, or, at least, partakes more of the qualities of one than another; so that when you understand a certain type, you have the key that will unlock the door to the general character of every person belonging to that cast or type. In addition to this, there are certain principles which lie at the foundation of human nature, and the existence or manifestation of

these principles will be perceptible, to a greater or less extent, in the formation of individual character. One is, that size and quality are a measure of power; another, that no faculty or organ can display its full power until fully developed and properly exercised; another, that coarseness or fineness, or in other words, the texture of the human body, is indicative of a like condition of the mind.

“A fine mind is always indicated by a fine organization. As well look for the sun to shine at night, as to see elegance, taste, refinement and delicacy of thought in one whose body is rough, coarse and common. The skin of such a person should be pure-looking, soft, even, and of fine texture. The hair should likewise be very fine and soft. Mind moulds and rules the body, and not the body the mind; therefore, if the mind is not finely organized, neither is the body. By fineness of mind, the largest and most active organ or organs of the brain will determine the general tone or character of conversation. Thus, if approbateness is the ruling faculty, the social conversation of those possessing it will be chiefly about themselves, their own business and social affairs, or those relatives, friends and acquaintances they may feel it to be a credit or benefit to themselves to speak of. If amateness and conjugality are the largest they will talk much about the opposite sex, courtship, marriage and love-affairs in all their various phases. What people think about the most, *they like to talk about when they have the opportunity.*

“All the moral organs have their signs more or less expressed in the physiognomy, and especially in the conduct and attitude. Conscientiousness imparts a grave and even stern expression to the face. Hope imparts a sort of cheerfulness; in one with a good degree of the vital temperament, it inspires a marked sprightliness in

the play of the features, and buoyancy and life in the attitudes, and so on.

"These principles and these manifestations are the same throughout the entire human race; so that if we once understand them and carefully apply them, our deductions and conclusions will be correct in every instance."

Lawyer Caldwell was as we have said, an acute reader of human nature, and for that reason, looked forward with considerable eagerness and curiosity to his meeting with Arthur Douglas.

At last, he stood before the door of his cell, and a moment later the turnkey flung it open, saying in his low, measured tone, "No. 23, your lawyer is here, and wishes to speak with you." A young man who had been sitting on the only seat the narrow cell contained, rose quickly, and looked eagerly at the visitor.

"I have been expecting you, Mr. Caldwell," he said, with eager wistfulness. "Pray enter and be seated."

The lawyer gave him a quick, keen glance. The tall handsome figure and frank, open countenance impressed him favorably, as well as the deep, well modulated tone of the speaker's voice.

His critical examination was :

An amiable face, loving mouth, soft, gentle eye, a refined nose, strong moral brain, good intellect, and decidedly strong affections; wins the world by his tenderness and affection, though he is a man of talent, and especially has he sympathy and human nature, hence his perfect personations of sympathetic character. Organ of friendship large; organ of destructiveness decidedly small.

A well-balanced physiognomy and phrenology; the splendid chin shows strong vital power and eminent social tendencies, while the nose indicates refinement,

precision, criticism, self-reliance, and his forehead, easy adaptation to his circumstances and surroundings. A large brain and harmonious temperament, a good moral development.

"You have been in the fresh air and sunshine," said Arthur Douglas. "Could you not have brought in some for me?"

"There is but little sunshine in this dreary place," replied Donald Caldwell. "I have hastened to you. The assizes are fixed for the twelfth; we have no time to lose."

"The assizes!" he cried, his face growing colorless even to the lips. "I cannot realize it, Mr. Caldwell; it seems to me like a hideous dream—a nightmare—a horror that I cannot face! Do you mean to tell me that I, Arthur Douglas, must stand and take my trial in a crowded court on a charge of *murder*?"

"It is so, unfortunately," replied the lawyer; "but, remember, trial is not conviction—people are acquitted as well as condemned. Will you sit down, Mr. Douglas, and let us begin business at once? I want to draw an outline of your defence this morning."

"How can it be my defence," he said, indignantly, "when I am innocent?"

"I want to prove your innocence," answered the lawyer, quietly, "and I can do it best from your own lips. Will you sit down, Mr. Douglas, and we will begin."

He still stood looking at him with dreamy eyes. The turnkey had left them together.

"I remember seeing you once at the great banquet in London," he said, suddenly. "Did you see me? It was last Christmas."

"Yes," replied Lawyer Caldwell, "I seldom forget a face,—I remember you, you sat opposite me at the table. I saw you."

"Did you think, then, that it would ever be your fate to defend me on a trial for murder?"

"Heaven knows that such a wildly improbable thought never crossed my mind," he replied.

"I remember," he continued, "looking at you; you were talking to the Duke of Hess, and I thought what a clever face you had. I never dreamed that I should stand in a prison cell with you for my only friend."

"We must open the doors of the cell," said the lawyer, trying to speak cheerfully. "Will you sit down, Mr. Douglas?" he asked again. "I have much to say to you. I consider that in a great measure your life is in your own hands, for it depends entirely on the defence which you will enable me to make for you."

He drew his chair to the table and placed on it different papers and closely folded documents; he sat opposite to him, fear and anger in his eyes.

"As the case stands in its bare details," he said, "without any defence, I am bound most sorrowfully to say, it is against you, Mr. Douglas. The question is, on what grounds shall I conduct the defence? You have a good case of your own, no doubt?"

"I have none," replied Arthur. "I have no defence."

"No defence?" repeated Lawyer Caldwell.

"None, except my own word. I did not do it; I am perfectly innocent of all knowledge of it," replied Arthur in a firm voice.

The lawyer looked perplexed.

"You must have more to say than this," he cried; "the unravelling of the mystery must lie in your hands."

"It does not," answered Arthur, firmly. "I know nothing of it. I did not do it! It is absurd to think that I, who have never injured any human being, who have never inflicted pain on anything created; I, who have turned aside in my path lest I should tread upon a



worm; that I could have *murdered*—a crime so black and horrible as to be rare even in this wicked world. Even supposing that I could be black enough in heart and soul to have done such a thing—what interest had I in such a deed?"

"The world says you disliked him," said Lawyer Caldwell.

"That is quite true," he replied, calmly. "I disliked him more than any man I have ever met."

"The world says you cared for—or I may say plainly—you loved the woman the Earl of Dunraven was to wed; and the world kindly adds *that* was your motive for the murder."

For one moment lawyer and client looked steadily into each other's eyes; they seemed to read each other's soul. Then a spasm of pain passed over Arthur Douglas' face and his lips quivered.

"We had better speak plainly," he said. "You are here to defend me. *Have you already judged me?*"

"My dear Mr. Douglas, be reasonable," replied the lawyer. "We are strangers to each other. If I had to judge from your face I should say you were innocent as an angel. The defence in your case has been put into my hands. I must judge from the circumstances that surround the case. One thing is quite certain in a matter of this kind, it is the best and wisest policy *always to tell your own lawyer the perfect truth*. Knowing it, he still takes the greatest interest in clearing you. Knowing it, he is forewarned and forearmed; at no point of the case can anything unforeseen turn up and perhaps spoil the whole line of his defence. It is better, wiser, more politic in every sense and way that the lawyer who holds the defence in his hand should know the exact and perfect truth."

There was silence again for some minutes, and the

prisoner's face grew more troubled. Donald Caldwell went on :

"A lawyer knows almost as much of human nature as a doctor or a priest. Nothing surprises him, nor should any one be afraid to make a full confession to him. It is the safest and the only plan."

The troubled face drooped still lower. The lawyer's kindly heart was deeply touched.

"From what you have read of the case, Mr. Caldwell, from what you have heard, will you tell me what you yourself think—do you judge me innocent or guilty?"

"That is hardly a fair question," replied the lawyer. "As I have said, if I judged you from outward appearances, I should say 'innocent.' If I judged you by the bare newspaper report, I should say that appearances were decidedly against you. My business is to find out the truth and then do the best I can for you."

The troubled look seemed to clear from Arthur Douglas' face.

"I will tell you the truth," he said. "I cannot compel you to believe it. *I feel that I am innocent of this crime as you are.* I am as innocent of any knowledge or complicity in it as you can be ; and I call Heaven, my only refuge, to witness the truth of what I say. I will tell you my story—surely the strangest one that man ever had to tell."

And this he proceeded to do, and at the close of it, Lawyer Caldwell found himself wondering whether indeed the young man was *innocent* or *guilty*.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### LAWYER CALDWELL MEETS WITH AN ACCIDENT.

FOR some moments after Arthur Douglas had ceased speaking, Lawyer Caldwell sat looking intently from the window. Suddenly he turned to his client, saying earnestly :—

“I am more puzzled now than I was when I first undertook the case. I see no motive for the crime. I can see no solution of the mystery. It is all perfectly incomprehensible to me; I see no grounds of defence. Appearances are against you, but all the evidence that can be brought against you is purely circumstantial. It is a difficult case.”

“I see it,” said Arthur Douglas, sadly; “but it is hard for me, Mr. Caldwell. I have done nothing on earth to deserve it. I am most certainly as innocent of all knowledge of the crime as an angel from heaven could be. It is bitterly, cruelly hard that I should have to suffer for *what must be either the sin of another, or an accident*. Do you think, on such evidence as will be brought against me—do you think that any jury would condemn me?”

“I do not like to arouse your fears, neither do I wish to give you any false hopes,” the lawyer gravely replied. “The case, as it stands against you, certainly looks *desperate*. I had hoped, in listening to the story of your life, that I should hear something which would at least be the groundwork of my defence, but the story is bare

enough; but for all that I will do the best I can for you."

While this interview was taking place in the Branlea jail, one quite as thrilling was transpiring in the drawing-room of Trevalyn Hall, that morning:

With the unexpected resources which Miss Trevalyn suddenly found herself possessed, she was enabled to purchase back the old home which had been the home of the Trevalyns for generations back,—and here she was once more installed as the young mistress,—with Rachel and all the old, faithful retainers about her.

No words could tell how she missed the old squire. If she had known the whereabouts of her stepmother, she would have written her, that she might still have a home at Trevalyn Villa if she felt so disposed, for the sake of the love the poor squire had borne her in the past, so forgiving and benevolent was the gentle heart that beat in Helen Trevalyn's bosom.

Since her return to Branlea, all her thoughts and hopes were centred in this one aim—to secure the freedom of the man she loved. On this eventful morning of which we speak, Helen had been much disturbed by a card that had been handed her. It bore the name of Hubert Harper. On the back of it were the pencilled words: "Please believe that it would be for your interest to see me, Miss Trevalyn."

"Shall you go, Miss Helen?" asked Rachel, anxiously.

"I suppose I must," answered the girl.

Mr. Harper was standing at the window, with his back turned to her when she entered the room. At the sound of her silken skirts on the velvet carpet he wheeled suddenly about, advancing with outstretched hands to meet her.

Miss Trevalyn drew back with cold pride.

"You wished to see me," she said haughtily. "May I ask that you will make this interview as short as possible."

"You still hold out as stiffly as ever against me, I see," he said, with a lowering brow.

"Did you come here to renew the subject of your last interview with me?" asked Miss Trevalyn with superb anger, rising hastily from the chair on which she had seated herself.

"I came to make a last proposition to you, Miss Helen," said, Harper coolly. "You defied my power, and now you see what that power has accomplished. No one on earth could save Arthur Douglas—but myself."

"How could *you* save him?" breathed Helen, in a low voice, catching her breath hard.

"Promise to marry me and the way shall be made clear to you," he returned eagerly. "Refuse,—and the law shall take its course. Your great London lawyer might as well attempt to beat back the ocean waves as to snatch young Douglas from the fate that awaits him.

"Then how could *you* accomplish it?" repeated Helen, in a voice husky with intense repressed emotion.

For the first time in his life, the usually shrewd, calm detective lost his head, replying quickly: "I know of a woman for whom the case would look quite as dark as it does now for Douglas. Marry me and I swear to you I will throw open the prison doors and set him free."

"And if I still refuse your offer?" murmured Helen, in a hard, constrained half-whisper.

"Then I shall not raise one finger to keep him from hanging!" declared Harper.

"According to your own words you know Mr. Douglas to be *innocent*, and you believe that there is some woman connected with the affair. I shall tell Mr. Caldwell of

these remarks," declared Helen; "they may aid him materially."

All in a flash Harper saw his mistake in making this fatal admission.

"I advise you not to mention it, my dear Miss Trevalyn, for that would bring out the lady in the case, whom I would give my life to shield."

"You could not mean—you *dare* not insinuate—that—that—"

"I regret that I can say no more on the subject," he declared.

Miss Trevalyn's face turned deadly white. "My God!" she cried, recoiling, uttering the words in a faint, awful whisper, "surely you could not be so cruel as to think that *I* was—the—the—"

"I repeat that I have nothing more to say on the subject," replied Harper, with a low, mocking bow. "Mr. Douglas' fate lies in your hands—you can save him—or—not—as you decree."

"Leave me!" cried Miss Trevalyn, "you torture me beyond words! Your presence another moment here would *kill* me."

"I go," returned Hubert Harper, "but remember this: if you would save Arthur Douglas, you must recall me before it is too late. You understand that would mean that you will be—my wife." Without another word he bowed himself from her presence.

This interview proved too much for the strength of Helen's overwrought nerves; ere the sound of his footsteps had died away, she had fallen to the floor in a deep swoon, and there Rachel found her some time later.

Who shall attempt to describe the days that followed, for each day brought the trial of Arthur Douglas nearer. Miss Trevalyn visited her lover in Branlea jail regularly,

and those who witnessed these interviews and the parting of the lovers described them as heart-rending.

Much to Harper's wonder, the day of trial came and he had not heard one word from Miss Trevalyn. People came to Branlea to hear the trial from all parts of England. It was the general topic of conversation. There had been nothing like the excitement it created in Branlea for years. Even the best friends of Arthur Douglas shook their heads, and told each other that they dared not think what the result might be. They predicted too, some terrible *dénouement* if Miss Trevalyn persisted in coming to hear the trial and being near her lover when the verdict was announced. Even Lawyer Caldwell tried to remonstrate with her against this step.

"My place is by his side," she said, raising her dark, tear-wet eyes to his face, "and—and—if—they pronounce him guilty, I will fall on my face dead." This was the very thing the lawyer feared.

Lawyer Caldwell had worked incessantly for his client, his days had been given up to preparing his line of argument, his nights had been without sleep. He had prepared a most elaborate and exhaustive defence; he had the firmest faith in his innocence, and yet he despaired of the result. Everything was against him, and in his favor there was nothing to say. If ever circumstantial evidence went against any one, it was against Arthur Douglas. He had but the faintest hope; he had had repeated interviews with him, and at each one he had started some fresh theory, only to find it useless.

No one connected with that memorable affair ever forgot how dark and cloudy was the morning of this day which was to prove so eventful. Before noon a few rain-drops, like angels' tears fell. This certainly did not look very comforting and hopeful to Arthur Douglas. By noon the largest concourse of people had gathered within

the narrow limits of the court-room that was ever banded together beneath one roof in Branlea. And then began the trial that was to end in life or the death of the handsome, calm-faced young man who occupied the prisoners' box.

The evidence was strong; no one else had even a faint dislike to the hapless young Earl of Dunraven. The crime had not been committed for booty; his jewelry was lying about, but not even a ring had been touched. There was no possible motive to be assigned save jealousy; there was no one jealous but Arthur Douglas.

So argued the prosecution; so thought the jury; and in defence what was there to be said? But from the first it was noticed that the evidence was telling against him. The jury had to steel themselves, as they listened.

Yes, the evidence had told against him; one could read it in the faces of the jurymen, which grew graver and sadder—in the face of the judge, which was sorrowful with a great sorrow—in the weeping eyes of women and the bent brows of stern men.

Only one man had noticed the entrance of a woman, who had edged her way into the crowded court-room, keeping the long cloak she wore tightly folded about her, and her veil drawn closely over her face—taking her seat near the door—and that was Harper, the detective.

"If it isn't Fifine, by all that is wonderful!" he muttered under his breath. "I was sure this trial would draw her here as a needle to the magnet. He circled the room until he stood directly behind her, but she was too interested in watching, and listening with breathless attention to every word that fell from the prosecutor's lips to pay heed to anything else transpiring around her. "I shall know just where to put my hands on you if I want you, my fair Fifine," he muttered with much satisfaction, as he leaned back against an adjacent post and



gave himself up to watching the proceedings of the trial again.

"That pretty young girl," as they had styled Helen Trevalyn, was quite as much an object of curiosity as the handsome prisoner himself. She sat quite erect, her fair, sweet face white as snow, her dark eyes lowered and drenched with tears, her little clasped hands trembling in her lap. The vast crowd did not wonder as they watched her, that each of these two lovers should have fought so bitterly to have won her.

No one knew the thoughts that were struggling in the girl's mind as she listened to the fatal evidence against her lover, which was strong. People of unimpeachable veracity came forward and said that they had heard the prisoner threaten that he would slay the deceased if he took from him the woman he loved; and those words, spoken by him in the mad frenzy of jealousy, meaning nothing then, had a very different and far more horrible sound when repeated in a court of justice. He had been heard to threaten the Earl of Dunraven on different occasions. A dozen witnesses could swear to the ill-feeling there was between the two. There was a hush in the crowded court-room when the great criminal lawyer, Donald Caldwell, took his stand to open out the defence. But as he uttered the first few words, every one noticed that there was something terribly wrong with him, his face paled, his hands shook, and the usually sonorous voice was low and husky. He had barely finished the first sentence ere he threw up his hands and fell heavily to the floor stricken with apoplexy.

There was a great furore, when he was carried from the room. Despite their grave fears for the brilliant lawyer, they were equally as anxious for handsome Arthur Douglas, and for the young girl who looked on with a look of terror in her eyes.

The presiding judge was just about to adjourn the great trial, on account of Lawyer Caldwell's sudden illness, when an extraordinary event happened.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GREAT UNKNOWN, WHO ELECTRIFIES JUDGE AND JURY  
BY HIS POWERFUL APPEAL.

I can but own my life is vain,  
A desert void of peace ;  
I missed the goal I sought to gain,  
I missed the measure of the strain  
That lull's Fame's fever in the brain  
And bids earth's tumults cease.

At this important juncture, a stranger rose hastily from among the crowd and begged that the trial might be permitted to go on, and that he might undertake the defence for just one hour's time.

"I am a lawyer," continued the stranger, "and know more about this case, perhaps, than any living man, Lawyer Caldwell *not* excepted. I have travelled hundreds of miles to be present to-day. All I ask is one hour's time ere the case be adjourned."

The presiding judge hesitated a moment, and in that moment the cry of the people, urging that the stranger might be heard, certainly influenced him. It was plainly evident Lawyer Caldwell would never again plead before an earthly judge, and the fate of the prisoner, Arthur Douglas, could hardly be in worse shape. He decided to let the stranger proceed for the defence. At this, a loud murmur of approbation ran through the room.

The stranger did not impress the people very favorably at first glance; his face was too pallid, his dark restless

eyes had a strange gleam in them, and his hair and whiskers were too black and bushy. But in all the annals of the law no more brilliant defence has ever been recorded than that made by the stranger in favor of Arthur Douglas. It was a masterpiece of eloquence, of subtle reasoning, of close argument. People listened entranced: they would have so listened all day. He spoke for four hours, and the attention of his hearers never flagged.

He took the points that had been brought against him one after the other, and, in the opinion of many, completely demolished them.

It was an argument never forgotten by those who heard it for its astonishing force, its keen wit, its bitter satire and its subtle pathos. The eloquence of this silver-tongued orator astounded his hearers, and as he warmed with his theme his words stirred the hearts of the people as the whirlwind stirs the leaves of the trees. Women wept, and tears came to the eyes of strong men. And then the stranger made an appeal to the jury for Arthur Douglas' life, that fairly electrified them. He warned them against being led by appearances, by circumstantial evidence, and left the life of Helen Trevalyn's lover in their hands. And when the grand, sonorous voice ceased, there was scarcely a dry eye among that vast concourse of people.

After the summing up of the judge, the jury retired to consider their verdict. As Arthur Douglas watched them leave the court, his very life seemed to go with them. "Guilty, or Not Guilty?" He would soon know his fate—freedom or the scaffold stood before him. A few minutes, or a few hours, and he should know. His eyes had grown dim and sightless, a confused murmur filled his ears. Said one stranger to another in the crowd:

"I would not have been on that jury for the world. I have been present during the whole trial ; I have heard all the evidence, yet, if it were to save my life, I could not tell whether that man is innocent or guilty. I have never heard evidence so evenly balanced. I cannot tell whether Arthur Douglas is a clever, designing criminal, or a cruelly injured man.

At last the sunshine of that September day faded, and a dull yellow light filled the court. When the jury went out to consider their verdict, the prisoner, white and cold as death, was led from the dock. The jury were absent for more than an hour, and when they returned it was to a scene no one ever forgot. Through the large windows could be seen the darkening sky, and the hoarse murmur of the crowd surrounding the court could be plainly heard. Tier after tier of eager faces was lifted, all eyes were bent in one direction. The gas had been lighted and threw a curious, livid hue on the hundreds of assembled faces. The one object of interest was the slender figure of Helen Trevalyn, who still sat quite erect, her hands clasped, her fair, sweet face white as snow, her blue eyes lowered and drenched with tears, her lips closed like the bud of a white flower—surely the most pitiful figure ever seen on earth.

Oh, heaven ! that the agony of it did not kill her ! The jury returned. The suspense and excitement were something terrible. One wild prayer went from her heart to her lips—one prayer, that heaven would take pity on her, and spare her her lover's life went up to the great White Throne.

Slowly they took their places, and then the question was asked that meant life or death to Arthur Douglas.

"How say you, gentleman of the jury—do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty ?"

There was a moment's silence ; one might have heard

a pin drop ; in the whole of that crowded court there was not a sound.

"Guilty!" was the word that fell like a death-knell—and the eager expectation gave way to a murmur of dismay.

"Innocent, I say, and I will prove it!" cried a voice that sounded like nothing human, and Miss Trevalyn sprung to her feet, quivering with intense excitement. "Hear me!" she cried. "I say he did *not* kill the Earl of Dunraven. *I know who did it.*"

This thrilling announcement did not produce the effect upon the people that she expected. Only one woman seemed to hear it—a woman dressed in black—who wore a long silk cloak and a dark veil drawn closely over her face. She half rose from her seat, and those about her heard her utter a frightened gasp, then she sunk down again shivering as with a sudden chill. It was—*young Mrs. Trevalyn, incognito.*

People turned pitying glances upon Miss Trevalyn.

"I knew how it would end," one said to the other, "the verdict has turned the girl's brain."

Gently they led Miss Trevalyn from the crowded room though she pleaded vehemently to be allowed to speak. Even the judge refrained from rebuking the girl for this outbreak, out of pity for her great grief. And the people said when they saw her swoon and fall back into the arms of Rachel, her faithful maid, that, "unconsciousness was a boon from heaven to her in this dread hour."

As for Arthur Douglas, he walked with a firm step from the crowded room.

Every one noticed how visibly the stranger who had made such noble efforts to save Arthur Douglas was affected when the jury brought in the verdict of "guilty."

"I did my best to save him," he muttered, in a husky voice to one of the bystanders, and, turning away he was suddenly lost in the crowd.

It seemed to Helen Trevalyn that life ended for her that night. She prayed heaven that she might never see the dawn of another day. "My brain is turning, Rachel," she moaned, as she paced the floor rapidly to and fro, wringing her hands. "I have often thought with wonder what people must feel when they are going mad; *now* I realize it all. Oh, Rachel, they are taking him from me, and—and—he is *innocent*, I tell you he is *innocent*."

"I believe that too," sobbed Rachel, "but oh, Miss Helen, twelve good and honest men see things different from what we do."

"He is innocent," reiterated Helen Trevalyn. "If they kill him, I shall die too, as Juliet died when death took her Romeo from her." But Rachel thought this was only an idle threat.

The fortitude of Arthur Douglas himself was something wonderful. But no one knew how, when he reached the narrow confines of his cell again, he broke down utterly, and throwing himself upon his narrow cot gave vent to tears such as only strong men can shed in great crises of their lives.

And thus his friend Montgomery found him when he sought him a little later.

"For myself I do not care," he said with desperate calmness at length, "but I grieve for my Helen, bless her! This blow aimed at *me* will strike her too. Through it all she has faith in my innocence, Montgomery. Ah, was there ever a love as true, as steadfast, as noble as hers?"

"She is indeed a noble girl," responded Montgomery.

"If I could have lived I would have devoted my life to my darling," he went on huskily. "You cannot realize the awful sensation a man feels, when, in the midst of youth, health and strength, he knows that he *must die*. That all unprepared his soul is to be ushered into the great eternity beyond, that awaits us all sooner or later.

"If one is brought face to face with death from sickness or accident, it is not so terrible to await the end calmly and with fortitude; but to await a death *like* this acts like madness on the brain. To look out and see the sunshine, knowing that you will see it rise and set but a few short days, is a feeling that I cannot fully describe, it is so appalling. A thousand times I have went over in my mind every detail of that awful night's occurrence, and again I solemnly assert to you that I cannot tell whether I am indeed innocent—or—guilty. It is this uncertainty that brings with thoughts of death the cruellest sting.

"Promise me, Montgomery, that you will be a brother to my Helen after—I—am—gone. Poor girl! she will almost break her heart grieving for me at first—but after a time the bitterness of her grief will wear away.

"We bury those we love best, grieve for a time with a mighty grief, and then as the years roll on, we forget them; perhaps it is better so. A great writer has somewhere said :—

I now, as my life grows older,  
And mine eyes have clearer sight—  
That under each rank Wrong, somewhere  
There lies the root of Right.  
That each sorrow has its purpose—  
By the sorrowing oft unguessed,  
But as sure as the sun brings morning,  
Whatever is—is best.



"I know that each sinful action,  
As sure as the night brings shade,  
Is sometime, somewhere, punished.  
Tho' the hour be long delayed.  
I know that the soul is aided  
Sometimes by the heart's unrest,  
And to grow, means often to suffer—  
But whatever is—is best.

"I know there are no errors  
In the great Eternal plan,  
And all things work together  
For the final good of man.  
And I know when my soul speeds onward  
In the grand Eternal quest,  
I shall say, as I look back earthward,  
Whatever is—is best."

For a moment both were silent ; suddenly Arthur Douglas said :—"I should like to thank the man who conducted my defence so grandly, who is he ?"

But no one could tell, nor could any trace of him be found. He seemed to have vanished as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him.

When they told Arthur how bitterly the stranger had taken his defeat in attempting to save him, great as Arthur's grief was, he could not help but wonder at it. "I cannot understand," he said thoughtfully.

"Nor can I," returned Montgomery.

"You say he is a stranger here," continued Arthur, "but it strikes me that I have seen him before,—sometime, somewhere in my life. Those dark, restless eyes are strangely familiar."

"I think that is only your fancy," said Montgomery. "No one around here seems to know him."

Arthur Douglas was too troubled to fix his thoughts on any subject for any length of time, and after spending an

hour or so with him in the vain hope of consoling him, Montgomery took his leave.

From the first he had been a firm believer in Arthur Douglas' innocence, but, like Lawyer Caldwell, he was baffled at every point in his attempt to establish it. He was quite powerless,—he could do nothing; and the time was drawing near when the last and most terrible act of the tragedy was to take place. He left no stone unturned—but what could he do? He sifted all the evidence over and over again. It was no use; nothing seemed to be of the least avail.

But, great as Montgomery's grief was, it was as nothing compared to the agony Helen Trevalyn suffered as the days dragged their slow lengths by. No one was surprised to learn, at length, that she was very ill,—and for a time her life was despaired of. It was pitiful to see her, in her delirium, hold out her white arms and call for her lover, and wonder why he did not come to her. Heaven was kind to her that she did not realize that the lover who would have given his life's blood for her was withheld from her by cruel iron bars.

Montgomery made a valiant fight for his friend's life; a petition was drawn up and numerously signed praying that, as the evidence against Arthur Douglas was wholly circumstantial, the sentence might be commuted; but the Home Secretary saw no cause for interference and the law was to take its course.

Every one hoped that the fatal day would come and go without Miss Trevalyn knowing it. Faithful Rachel, who watched over her young mistress, prayed for it. But Heaven knew best in not granting her prayer, and on the morning of that never-to-be-forgotten day, Helen Trevalyn opened her eyes to consciousness.

For a moment, seeing Rachel bending over her she was quite bewildered. "Have I been ill?" she in-

quired faintly, but before Rachel could answer, a cry so wild and bitter that it terrified her broke from Miss Trevalyn's lips, and clutching at her hands she shrieked out in terror. "For the love of heaven tell me quickly—has the fatal day passed! or has it not yet come?"

## CHAPTER XIX.

FATE HAS BEEN AGAINST ME FROM THE CRADLE TO THE  
GRAVE.

Not one could tell, for nobody knew,  
Why love was made to gladden a few,  
And hearts that would forever be true,  
Go lone and starved the whole way through.

RACHEL hesitated. "This is the day, Miss Helen," she said, "but it has not taken place yet, not until eleven o'clock—it is only eight in the morning now. I had hoped that you would not know until all is over. Heaven comfort you, Miss Helen; try to bear it."

Miss Trevalyn turned her face to the wall with the bitterest moans that ever were heard.

It is intense grief like this that kills, as Rachel well knew, and she said to herself that she must use strategy to secure for poor Miss Helen release from her bitter woe by giving her a potion that would produce a deep sleep. Surely it would be a mercy to sleep through these dread hours.

Slipping a vial from the stand which stood beside the couch, Rachel poured a few drops from it into a glass of water, little knowing that Helen had been watching her movements through the mirror on the opposite wall and divined her intention at once, and she was by no means surprised when Rachel approached her, glass in hand, a moment later, and begged that she would take a draught of cold water, she looked so feverish.

"I will take it if you will fetch a piece of ice for it," said Helen, and Rachel hurried out of the room at once to execute her order.

The door had no sooner closed behind her, then Helen stretched forth her hand, and, grasping the goblet, tossed its contents into a cuspadre close by.

Rachel was surprised to find the goblet empty when she returned with the ice.

"You were gone too long," said Helen, evasively.

"She will sleep soon," thought Rachel, looking compassionately down on the beautiful white face, and she asked gently: "Is there anything more that I can do for you, Miss Helen?"

"Yes; leave me to myself," replied Helen, "and do not come to me until I ring for you."

Rachel drew the blinds and lowered the heavy silken curtains, shutting out the sunlight, then stole softly from the room. The sound of her footsteps had scarcely died away ere Helen sprung tremblingly from the couch and commenced robing herself, weak and ill though she was.

"Rachel would have tried to prevent me from going out if she knew of it," she murmured through her sobs, "but it must be done—it is a matter of life and death. I must save the living at the expense of the reputation of the dead."

"I shall go to Branlea jail, and there tell my father's story, and then they will say that *he*, and not Arthur Douglas—murdered—the—Earl of Dunraven. I cannot sacrifice my lover even to shield the honor of the dead. The hour has come when I *must* speak. You shall not die Arthur, love, if I can save you by any human power. Even if my father *was innocent*, the charge cannot harm him *now*."

Nobody noticed Miss Trevalyn slip quietly from the

house, stagger down the garden path, and pass out on to the high road. Her route to the village lay through the dense copse wood that skirted Branlea. It seemed to Helen that intense excitement kept her up, weak as she was, as she walked along.

She had traversed scarcely half the distance through the thick, dark wood, when she heard that which caused her to stand quite still. It sounded like a low moan of a human being in great pain. Helen listened intently, and from the dense copse wood to the right the sound was repeated.

Miss Trevalyn was braver than most young women; thrusting aside the branches she peered through them, and saw a man lying there beside a fallen log.

"Thank God, for the sight of a human face!" he cried as he saw her, adding faintly, "water—water, for the love of heaven, I am dying with thirst and pain, and water within sight yonder."

Miss Trevalyn felt no fear; hastily taking off her straw hat, for there was nothing else to be utilized, she filled it with the cooling water and brought it to him, and knelt down among the tall ferns and daisy-studded grass, holding it to his white, parched lips. He took a long draught and it seemed to revive him.

"For three days and three nights I have lain here," he gasped. "I was coming through the wood when the terrible storm came on; the lightning felled a great tree in the path before me. I sprang aside, but I was not quick enough; one of the great branches struck me. My left ankle and my arm is broken; above my heart there is a cruel wound, too, and I have lain here three days slowly dying, minute by minute, with the slow, awful, torturing pain of it.

"I know you!" he cried suddenly, between his heart-rending moans. "You are that pretty young girl from

Trevalyn Villa,—the girl that the Earl of Dunraven was to have wed. Do you know me?"

"Yes," answered Helen, "you are the brave, unknown lawyer who did so nobly in the defence of Arthur Douglas."

"But I could not save him," he moaned, "fate was against me. I—I have counted the hours as I lay here, and when the day dawned—this fatal day—when they are to take the life of Arthur Douglas on the scaffold—I—I thought I should go mad."

"Heaven bless you for the interest you have taken in him, sir," sobbed Helen. "I will thank you with my latest breath for it. I am on my way to save him now, sir; every moment is precious, and I will send people to aid you, sir. You shall be taken to Trevalyn Villa to be nursed back to health and strength."

"It would be all useless to remove me, I can as well die here as anywhere," moaned the stranger, "but send some one here to me quickly. It is I—not you—who can save Arthur Douglas from the gallows to-day for, listen Helen Trevalyn, bring all the people here to hear my confession, while yet there is breath enough left in me to confess it. *It was I who murdered the Earl of Dunraven on his wedding night.*"

A wild cry broke from Miss Trevalyn's lips—she drew back aghast, and looked at the stranger with dilated eyes.

At that moment there was a sound of carriage wheels, and to Helen's intense joy she saw two gentlemen approaching, one of whom she recognized as the judge of the court, and his companion one of the lawyers connected with the recent trial, and a man on the driver's box.

"Surely it must have been the hand of God that sent them in that direction in this propitious hour," Helen told herself.

With an eager voice she called to them, and in a moment they were kneeling in the long grass beside the wounded man, and to them the stranger repeated the words which had produced such a startling effect upon Miss Trevalyn. Both the judge and the lawyer were equally affected.

"I shall have time to tell my story," repeated the stranger, "for the sun shows me that it cannot be much more than the hour of nine, and—the—the—man—I must save is not doomed to die until eleven."

"You must make your story brief," said the judge. "Moments are precious." The judge turned and whispered hastily to his coachman and in an instant that individual was off like the wind.

"You need not send for the authorities to take me into custody," said the stranger, noticing the action, "for before they could arrive, I shall be where man's power cannot harm me, for men cannot pursue me beyond the gates of death."

"Be brief with your confession," urged the judge again. "Moments are passing swiftly—you must realize that. Are you willing for the lady to hear?" he asked, turning uneasily toward Miss Trevalyn.

"Yes, the story concerns *her*—at least the end of it," replied the stranger, speaking with difficulty.

The lawyer gave him a draught from a flask he had in his breast pocket, and the liquor revived him wonderfully.

"In the first place I am not what I seem," he said, and raising his right hand he tore off the dark hair and beard he wore, asking slowly, "Does any one here recognize me now?"

A low cry of amazement broke from Miss Trevalyn's lips. "John Burton, the Earl of Dunraven's valet," she gasped.



"I cannot believe what the man says," returned the lawyer, "he is suffering from an hallucination. *He could not* have murdered Dunraven, for the evidence is too strong against Arthur Douglas."

"Listen well to my story and then judge which of us did it," returned Burton, stolidly.

Still they were incredulous, but he proceeded.

"It is nearly ten years now since first I met the Earl of Dunraven, and a darker day for me never dawned," he commenced. "I am not John Burton; my name is Rodney Woodson. I live at the Crag, near Edinburgh, at least I did live there until my old mother died. Since then one place in the world has been the same as another to me. I was but a young man of twenty then; I worked in the mines earning my bread by the sweat of my brow.

"From the time I could remember, I was cursed with an ugly face, so ugly indeed that women turned from me with a shudder and children ran from me screaming with affright. It grieved me sorely, for, could I help it, because the Lord had made me ugly? I had not one redeeming feature, coarse, bristling red hair, cross eyes, a broken nose, fangs of teeth, and blotches of freckles.

"I was always destined to fill with horror and repulsion the heart of every one who looked upon me. Every one, did I say? Ah, there was one, Heaven bless her! who who did not look upon me as a human monster, and that was Lorie, the miller's daughter.

"But let me tell you why this was: from her early infancy Lorie had been blind. I saved her when she was a little toddling child from falling in the river Morne, and ever after her gratitude to me knew no bounds. I watched her grow day by day and year by year, and I loved her with a love such as few men know. And on the day she was sixteen, the thought first came into my head of making her my wife.

"She loved me in her sweet girlish way, I was full sure. She would never know how ugly of face I was, and how people shrank from me, and, God forgive me for it—there never was a day that I did not thank heaven that my Lorlie was blind.

"I cannot tell you how fair sweet Lorlie Vayne was ; it would take a man cleverer than myself to describe the sweet dimpled face framed in curling golden hair, and the great blue eyes. It was hard to believe, by those who saw her for the first time that, in those pansy blue eyes there was no sight."











